NUMBER ONE JOY STREET

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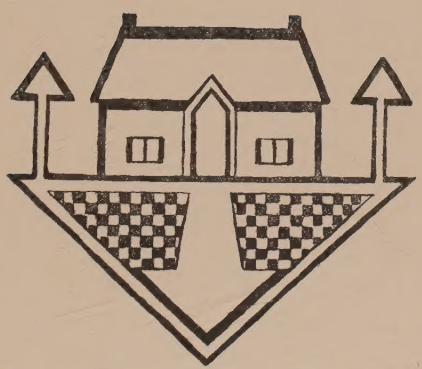

TO

ROSE FYLEMAN

WITH MANY THANKS
FOR HELP RENDERED
IN SETTING IN ORDER
THE FIRST HOUSE IN
OUR STREET

PIPER

PIPER, piper, play me a tune
Of a summery sunshiny afternoon,
And the little brown bunnies will all come out
Frisking and jumping and bobbing about.

Piper, piper, play me a tune
Of a posy of stars and a little wee moon,
And all the fairies will start to sing
And dance on the grass in a great round ring.

ROSE FYLEMAN.

Number One Joy Street

A Medley of Prose & Verse for Boys and Girls

By

WALTER DE LA MARE
ELEANOR FARJEON
HILAIRE BELLOC
MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE
B. KATHLEEN PYKE
LAURENCE HOUSMAN
MABEL MARLOWE
HALLIWELL SUTCLIFFE
EDITH SITWELL
HUGH CHESTERMAN
ROSE FYLEMAN

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NUMBER ONE JOY STREET

TOM COBBLE

By ELEANOR FARJEON

CHAPTER I

WHEN Tom Cobble of Shortways was seven years old, he got stolen by the fairies. Perhaps it would be better to say that he got himself stolen, for he certainly did it on purpose.

At about that time of life he was feeling rather offended. He was then living with his Grandfather, who kept one of the Lodges of the Duke's Park. The Park ran up hill and down dale, and the wall that went round it was twenty miles long, so that it had a great many Lodges, some of which were on high-roads and bye-roads, and others in woods and meadows. Tom Cobble's Grandfather's Lodge was lucky enough to lie in a dale, with the river flowing just outside, where fishermen would come to sit in the reeds in the middle of the night, with lanterns and creels beside them. The lanterns had lights in them, but the creels had nothing at all, except a little green grass at the bottom. Sometimes Tom would get out of the window when his Grandfather was snoring, and go and talk to the fishermen, but they were all deaf and dumb. This

was a pity, because Tom had a lot of interesting things to ask them, and even more to tell them.

"Why doos you fish in the dark?" said Tom Cobble. "There ain't never no fish in the river at night; they all goos and swims in the sky. Why doos you bait with worms and gentles? I don't like gentles I don't. You'd ought to fish with parsley sauce you did. Why doos you sit with your feet in the reeds? There was a fishingman once and his feet took root and growed there, and he couldn't goo away never no more, and so when my Grandad killed the pig I bringed him toasted chitterlings I did, but one time they mowed the reeds for thatching and so the fishingman ain't there no more he ain't, but they thatched him into Betsy Ware's lean-to and that's where he is now."

The fishermen never answered his questions, or even said "Oh!" to his information, but some wind or other would always blow up, and the reeds would say "Shish! shish!" This offended Tom Cobble.

Just inside the Lodge gate was a knobbly grassy hollow, with fruit-trees and chickens and patches of flower-beds, and a sheet of vegetables, and a green bucket lying on its side half in and half out of a weedy pond. All this was Tom's play-ground, but a bit further back the beeches and wild cherry-trees began, at the foot of a slope; the wild cherries got tired before they reached the top, but the beeches went all the way up. Tom Cobble was not supposed to go further than the first two cherry-trees, but he often tried to get as high as the top beech. This was difficult, because the ground was in ridges that were hard to climb and hollows that were easy to tumble in. They were covered and filled with beech-mast, as brown

as a fishing-sail on top, and as black as pickled walnuts underneath. The mast lay so thick in the hollows that Tom Cobble sometimes tumbled into a drift of beech-leaf as deep as snow, and he came out with the old leaves in his hair and down his neck, and sticking to every part of his little person before and behind; and his palms and knees were as black as walnut-juice. Then his Grandfather knew where he had been. So he needn't have asked,

" Where you been, Tom ?"

But he did.

Tom said, " I seed a little rabbit with horns on its head I did, and I runned to catch it by its little tail, but the tail comed off in my hand, and the Duke comed by with gold boots on and said if I would plant the little tail in the beech-mast another little rabbit would grow on it come Michaelmas, and so I did, Grandad, you come and see."

But his Grandad didn't come and see; he went instead to the chimney-place where his carpet slippers were warming, and he laid his grandson across his knee, and the slipper said " Slap ! slap !" This also offended Tom Cobble. For Tom Cobble saw the world in his own way, and if other people saw it different, he couldn't help that.

It was these things which made him get himself stolen by the fairies.

He knew how, quite well. He went one evening to the mushroom field before the moon was up, and lay down in the middle of the biggest green ring there without saying his prayers. When the moon came up, the fairies came out and got him.

" It's no manner of use, Tom Cobble," they said, when he woke up under the Hill. " We've got you fast for seven years, and it's no manner of use to cry."

" I aren't crying I aren't," said Tom. " Ol' Betsy Ware she cried when the fox got her chickens, she cried so hard she did 'at the Duke's Steward comed in a pink satin coach and laid a gold gutter down her garden to catch her crying, with a little pool for goldfishes at the bottom. But her tears was that hot 'at the goldfishes frizzled, an' she eat 'em for supper, an' she gived me one and it tasted like treacle pudden."

The fairies listened attentively, and then they looked worried and said, " What shall we do with him ?"

" Let's let him go," said one.

" We can't do that," said a second, " we've bound him fast for seven years, and who knows what he'll pick up in that

An old Enchanter limped forward.

time? Why, once he gets the hang of it, he'll outdo Puck himself."

"Hang o' what?" asked Tom Cobble.

"Magic," said a thoughtless elf—and clapped his hand over his mouth as he said it.

"We's got the hang o' magic at home we has," said Tom Cobble. "We hanged its flitch in the chimbley-piece the day afore I comed away; an' I left my Grandad a-plaiting of Puck's chitterlings I did, and the rest of him's in the pickle-tub."

At this an old Enchanter limped forward and said, "Give the brat to me. I'll keep him out of harm's way. He shall serve his time as my kitchen-boy, and learn no more than I choose."

So the fairies handed Tom Cobble over to the Enchanter and went back to their dancing.

THE Enchanter took Tom to his own part of the Hill, where he lived in three caves, one leading into the other. The first cave was the kitchen, full of pots and pipkins with fires under them. The fires were of different colours, rose and scarlet, gold, blue, and green, and in the pipkins the Enchanter brewed his charms and stewed his spells. It was to be Tom's job to look after the fires and clean the pots when necessary.

"Doos we cook the charms for supper?" asked Tom.

"No," said the Enchanter, "we don't trouble to cook supper."

"Doos we goo without supper?" asked Tom.

"No," said the Enchanter, "I just wave my wand."

Tom was to sleep in the kitchen.

The second cave, which had a table in it, was where they lived, and it was also the place where Ooney slept. Ooney was the Enchanter's daughter; she was about as old as sixteen, Tom thought, and she was very beautiful. Like the other fairies, she had a sort of moonshine frock on, but over it she

wore a big check apron with pockets, and in her hand she had a feather duster, with which she was dusting the table. The only difficulty was that as her duster touched the dust, the dust turned into silver pennies, which, pretty as they were, littered the table dreadfully. The Enchanter looked rather crossly at her and said,

" What a lot of work you make !"

" One must make something," said Ooney.

The Enchanter waved his wand and the dust all vanished, and Ooney's apron untied itself and hung itself up on the wall; but Ooney fetched it down and put it on again, and taking a leather from the pocket, fell to polishing the table vigorously, saying, " Who's that, father ?"

As she polished it, the table began to sing as sweet as a nightingale. This pleased Tom, but it seemed to vex Ooney; she said, " Stop it, can't you ? Stop it at once !" However, the table went on singing, so Ooney gave it up and asked again, " Who's that, father ?"

" It's Tom Cobble from Shortways," said the Enchanter. " We fetched him away to-night, and have got him for seven years."

" Betsy Ware had a table with a leg in the middle like a lion's foot," said Tom, " an' she polished an' polished the top till she polished it right off and only the leg was there. So it runned away to the spinney, an' it met a lion without any legs because of William Jenks'es rabbit-trapses, an' the lion he sat down on the top on the leg and it runned back to Betsy, so she has her dinner off the lion's back now, and when she has done he turns his head and licks off the crumbs. What's in the next room, mister ?"

" I want half a cupful of morning dew."

"That is *my* room," said the Enchanter, "and what is in it is no concern of yours. Nobody goes in that room but me."

And nobody did, during all the time Tom served as the Enchanter's kitchen-boy. The Enchanter kept all his magic in that room, and sometimes when his charms were brewing he came out with a big brown book under his arm, and read in it as he stirred the pot; then he might say, "Give me a pinch of that fernseed, Tom Cobble," or "I want half a cupful of morning dew from the big round bottle," or "Weigh me out an ounce of last year's thistledown," or "Measure me out a yard and three-quarters of spider-silk, quick now!" And Tom did as he was told, and tried hard to find out what the Enchanter was doing, and sometimes he almost succeeded. But there was always one little bit he could never quite discover.

Nevertheless, he learned how to make the fires under the pots, and what gave them their beautiful colours, but I shall not tell *you*, for this very good reason: you might go doing it too. And who knows what would happen then? For if you boil your breakfast egg over a fire-coloured fire of coal or coke or wood or peat, it is still an egg for breakfast; but if you boiled it over a blue or green or purple fire built of the old Enchanter's secret fuels, it might come out of the pot made of pure gold, or of grey rubber, or it might have wings on it and fly away—but whatever happened to it, it would no longer do for your breakfast.

At the end of his seven years, Tom was a nice tall lad of fourteen years old, and Ooney was still a very pretty fairy of sixteen. She had taken as good care of Tom as his own elder

sister could have done. She had washed his face and hands, and brushed his hair, and darned his jacket, and she always got him clean and smooth and neat. Tom did not really mind that after she had washed him his face underwent some change—it might be that his skin gleamed as though it had been gilded, or his nose was like a blackbird's bill; and when she had brushed his hair it would start growing up instead of down, or perhaps it would change into long green grass with buttercups growing in it. As for his jacket, the holes were mended right enough, but afterwards the jacket itself was never twice the same—it might be a blue velvet coat with brass buttons, or a bronze breastplate inlaid with copper, or a linen smock like Davy's, the Duke's head shepherd. Whatever it was, Tom Cobble put it on, for it was the only one he had. But as soon as the Enchanter saw him, he would wave his wand, and in a moment Tom had his right face and hair and coat again. Then the Enchanter would frown at Ooney and say,

"You see what a lot of work you make."

"Well, father," said Ooney, "who's to look after the boy if not me?"

When his time was up, and Tom came to take leave of Ooney and her father, the Enchanter said to him, "You've been a good boy, Tom Cobble, and to reward you I'll give you whatever you can carry away in your pocket."

"I'll have your brown book," said Tom, without thinking twice about it.

The Enchanter looked vexed and said, "Come now, let me give you the Purse of Fortune."

"No, thank you," said Tom.

" The Invisible Cap, then."

" Nor that neither," said Tom.

" Take the Flying Slippers," said the Enchanter.

" I'll take the brown book," said Tom.

The Enchanter saw there was no help for it, and gave him the book; but at the same time he blew on Tom's left eyelid.

Then Tom went back to Shortways.

CHAPTER III

SHORTWAYS was exactly as Tom had left it, for it was the sort of village that only changes once in a hundred years, when the Missus at the Garland Inn hangs up red curtains in place of chintz ones, and behind the flat little shop-window you see brandy-balls in the bottles instead of lollipops. It did, however, occur to Tom, as he walked down the street, that a good many new people had come into the place while he was away, for he didn't see a single face he remembered. He stopped at the shop to buy two ounces of brandy-balls, and the woman behind the counter wasn't Goody Green any more, but somebody quite different. She weighed out the brandy-balls and handed them to Tom, and he felt in his pocket and found he hadn't any money. So he said "Wait a bit," and looked in the Enchanter's book, and fiddled with one of the brandy-balls from the packet, and said something the woman couldn't catch; and the brandy-ball turned into a sixpenny bit, and Tom gave it to the woman, who gave him fourpence change, as her sweets were a penny an ounce, with four to the ounce. But as Tom had used one of the brandy-balls to turn into sixpence, there were only seven left in the packet, so she gave him another one out of the bottle as a makeweight, and he put it into his cheek and went down the lane that led to his Grandfather's Lodge by the river. This, too, was just as Tom had left it; the barndoor fowls were still picking about the grass, and the green bucket was lying on its side in the pond, but a tall, gaunt old woman he didn't know at all, about as old as

sixty-five Tom thought, was hanging out the washing on the line.

Tom walked through the gate up to the Lodge, for he wanted to find his Grandfather and his elder sister, but the old woman called " Hi !" in such a sharp voice that he stopped.

" If ye've brought them groceries at last," said the old woman, " ye can just fetch 'em here for me to count, and *I'll* take 'em in."

" I haven't brought any groceries," said Tom. " What sort were you wanting ?"

" What sort, indeed !" said the old woman irritably. " Where's my coffee-beans, I'd like to know, and where's my oatmeal, and my salt ? And what have ye done with the lump sugar, and the castor sugar, and the yaller soap, and the candles ? Lost 'em on the road, I suppose !"

" Wait a bit," said Tom Cobble, and he sat down and opened his book; and after a short read he began to fiddle with the twigs and the stones and the leaves and anything else that happened to be handy, and soon he had seven nice fat parcels done up in blue silk paper with silver stars on it, which he gave to the gaunt old woman. She handled them suspiciously.

" What's this here ?" she asked.

" Lump sugar, I think," said Tom.

She opened the parcel, and it *was* lump sugar, but it was all in one lump, and shaped like a duck, which quacked three times at the old woman and then laid a little lump of sugar in the palm of her hand. The old woman tossed her head, and undid another packet, and this was coffee-beans. They looked all right, but as she opened the packet a little more they rose up like a cloud of bees and swarmed on the low branch of a

The candles were just one candle that grew longer and longer

plum-tree close at hand. The old woman sniffed and fetched a skep, and shook the coffee into it, and set it on the bench with the other hives, where, instead of humming, it made a comfortable grinding sound, and smelt very good. The other parcels all had some peculiarity: the oatmeal was like gold-dust, but Tom said it would cook all right, and the yellow soap was striped with all the seven colours of the rainbow, and had a lovely poem in seven verses engraved one on each stripe, and the salt tasted like castor sugar, and the castor sugar like salt, and the candles were just one candle that grew longer and longer as the old woman pulled it out of the parcel, so that she never got to the end of it. When she had pulled out twenty yards or so she put it down, and set her hands on her hips, and looked at Tom and said,

" A nice grocer's boy *you* are."

" I'm not a grocer's boy at all," said Tom Cobble.

" Then what have ye come for?" said the exasperated old woman.

" To see my Grandad and my big sister," said he.

" Nobody lives here but me and my son," said she. " What was your Grandad's name?"

" Barnaby Cobble," said Tom.

The old woman looked at him very hard. " And what's your big sister's name?"

" Molly Cobble," said Tom, " but she's going to marry William Jenks when he gives up poaching."

The old woman looked at him harder still and said, " Oh, indeed! and what's *your* name?"

" Tom Cobble," said Tom Cobble.

Then the old woman looked at him hardest of all, and said, " Tom Cobble who was stole by the fairies ?"

" Seven years ago," said Tom.

" Seventy," said the old woman.

Then she took her hands from her hips, and pegged an apron on the line, and said, " Well, you've come back now, and there's no help for it. Your Grandad died fifty year back, and your sister Molly forty year back, and I'm your niece her daughter, and I keep the Duke's Lodge. My father William Jenks turned keeper, and died thirty year back, and twenty year back my husband Bob Drake died. Sally Drake's my name. My son's name's Jack, and he's the Duke's Head Keeper. Now, uncle, just take them things into the kitchen and put 'em away in the cupboard, and cut that candle up into sensible sizes, and don't start pulling on it any more for mercy's sake."

Tom did as his niece told him, and later on his great-nephew Jack, a sturdy man of five-and-thirty, came in, and was told by old Sally that her young uncle had just come back from the fairies and would live with them now, and the sooner they settled down together the better.

TOM'S return created a good deal of interest in the village for a day or two; people whose grandfathers had been babies when Tom was stolen would stop him on the road to ask how he was after all this time, what he had been doing all these years, and what he proposed to do now. To these questions he answered, " Very well, thank you," and " All sorts of things," and " I haven't made up my mind." Then one night Prince Carlo's Circus came along and pitched its tent in Half-Moon Meadow, and everybody's thoughts were full of lovely spangled ladies, and black-and-white ponies, and red-and-white clowns, and strong men who could carry worlds on their shoulders, and slim youths who could leap through the air like birds from one bar to another; and their ears were full of the sound of brass music, and their eyes of the sight of flaring

torches, and their noses of the smell of grass and sawdust. Tom went with the rest of the village to the twopenny seats, and liked it immensely, and after the Circus had departed the people talked of its wonders for a week and thought about Tom no more. And nobody but Sally Drake, his grim old niece, bothered to ask him what he proposed to do for a living.

" For it's high time, uncle," said she, " that a handy young lad of seventy-seven like you should be put to some trade."

" There's no hurry," said Tom. " I think when I'm older I'd like to be one of the Duke's keepers, and perhaps Jack would take me round with him so as I can get the hang of things."

Jack was agreeable, and they spent long days together in the wild Park; and Tom was taught how to handle a gun, and all the other ways of a keeper, with which I am not very well acquainted, so I cannot tell *you*. All I know is that one morning, as Jack and Tom were going through the Park, the Duke himself came up to them and said to Jack, " Good-morning, Drake. Something very funny's going on in this Park."

" Is it, your Grace?" said Jack Drake. " I hadn't noticed particular."

" Come along with me, then," said the Duke, " and I'll show you."

So they went along all three to one of the rabbit-warrens, and there were hundreds of rabbits racing along the runs they had scratched on the hillside; and big and little, brown and white, old and young, they all had horns on their heads.

" That's queer now," said Jack Drake, rubbing his eyes.

" And that's not all," said the Duke, and went a bit further on to a glade much favoured by his deer. And one and all,

dun and dappled, doe, buck, and fawn, they had wings on their backs.

" That's queerer still," said Jack Drake, scratching his head.

" Then what do you think of *this?*" said the Duke, and led the way to the biggest tumulus on his estate; and there, on the very top, stood a handsome mahogany table-leg with a claw foot, and planted atop of it was the body of a splendid lion, roaring in a friendly way and wagging its tail with pleasure.

Jack Drake rubbed his chin and said, " That's the queerest yet."

" It is," said the Duke, " and I don't like it at all; and as my Head Keeper I'll thank you to keep it from occurring again."

" I'll do my best, your Grace," said Jack Drake; and then he stared so hard at the Duke's feet that the Duke looked down too, and saw, to his great annoyance, that he had golden boots on. They looked very grand, to be sure, but they were hard and heavy, and most uncomfortable to walk in. He hurried home and changed them for his bedroom slippers, and sent to the bootmaker for another pair of leather boots; but after this, so sure as he walked in the Park he walked in gold. Before long he had a whole cupboardful of golden boots and shoes.

And this wasn't the end of the queer doings in Shortways that summer. When the fish began to leap, the fishermen came as usual with their reels and creels and lanterns to fish in the river outside the Lodge gates. No doubt they were the grandsons of the men Tom Cobble used to see there,

but they looked just exactly the same. There they sat in the dark among the reeds, as deaf and as dumb as of old. Tom Cobble came and watched them, but he did not ask them questions any more. While *they* fished in silence, *he* lay on the bank and read in his brown book. And one night a fisherman, attending to his bait which had just been carried away by a saucy perch, discovered to his vexation that his bait-box, instead of worms and gentles, was full of parsley sauce, and the other fishermen were in just the same case. So there was no more fishing that night.

The next night the fishermen came again, and cast their lines in the river, and Tom Cobble came too with his book, and sprawled in the reeds beside them. It was a lovely rainy night, and the fish were jumping a treat. But all of a sudden the rain stopped and the moon appeared as big as a silver plate, and no sooner did they see it than the jumping fish jumped clean out of the water and went leaping through the air till they were

safe in the dark blue sky; and there, as though they had been in their own sweet river, they swam round and round the moon all night, some swift, some slow, perch and bass and dace and little minnows, making the prettiest patterns with their supple slippery bodies and wavy fins. Several of the villagers turned out to see the sight when they heard what was happening; but those who preferred to keep their beds asked what it was like in the morning; and the fishermen went home, for there was no more fishing *that* night.

However, it is the hardest thing in the world to discourage a fisherman, and on the following night they were there again, and there, too, was Tom Cobble with his book. And this night the fishermen did not go away, but fished in peace with their usual sort of luck. But when the morning came and they thought they would make a move, they found they couldn't, for every man had taken root in the reeds where he sat, and there he was whether he liked it or not.

The village children were very nice to the fishermen in the reeds, and bought them licorice shoe-strings from the shop to cheer them up, and whenever the fish jumped they cast their lines contentedly and hadn't such a bad time of it after all. Except one, who had the misfortune to be mowed down with a bundle of reeds, where he was overlooked by Jem Turner the thatcher, who thatched him into the gable-end of an old cowshed that wanted patching up. However, his arms were left free, so the children put a bucket of rain-water on the ground below, and gave him his fishing-line to drop into it, and then he was as happy as the day was long.

I relate these events just so that you can know the sort of thing that now began to happen in Shortways, and went on

Harry Blossom and his queer left shoe.

for the next seven years, but these were mere nothings. If I told you even a fiftieth part of Tom Cobble's lop-sided magic, you wouldn't be in bed before breakfast-time. Sally Drake suspected him and his book from the first, and pretty soon told her son Jack to be quit of the boy as a keeper, and apprentice him to the village Cobbler.

The Cobbler took Tom on for a year, during which time Tom made boots and shoes very deftly, but something was always wrong. The right-hand shoe was perfect, but the left-hand shoe was queer. The first pair he ever made was for Harry Blossom, the Potman of the Garland Inn. He pulled them on behind the bar, and made one step forward with his right to serve Jem Turner with a draught of porter—and the next step he took he was over the counter and standing on Doctor Daly's onion-bed, a quarter of a mile down the road. He started back with his right, and then his left plunged forward and landed him breathless in the school-house, where the children were chanting,

" Twice one is two !"

" That depends," said Harry Blossom, sitting down quick on the floor before he was betrayed into another step; and he pulled off his boots and walked the half-mile back to the Garland Inn in his socks.

The next pair Tom Cobble made was for the Parson, who wore them one Sunday to church. The right boot was a sober boot enough, but the left boot was given to dancing. So sure as it touched the ground, up it flew like a columbine. The Parson was late as it was and couldn't turn back; he managed to get to the church unseen, but he created some surprise when he pirouetted into the pulpit, where for safety he stood

the whole morning on one leg to deliver his sermon. Or perhaps Tom's left shoe had the power of flying, or the knack of pinching you whenever you told the least little fib—Tom Cobble himself was a strictly truthful boy—or perhaps his left slipper might be made of pure glass.

Well, the Cobbler passed him on to the Blacksmith, where he made horseshoes that galloped off the anvil and up the hill without waiting so much as to make the acquaintance of the horse standing to be shod; it was an alarming thing to meet one of Tom's red-hot horseshoes racing through the fields, taking the gates and ditches, and fetching up at last in the stable, where it stood waiting for the horse to come while it cooled off. So the Blacksmith passed him on to the Farmer, where the clover and the corn, and the poppies in among them, came up that year made of silk and calico, like the flowers in the Squire's Lady's Sunday bonnet, and in little Daisy Martin's market-hat. And when one day the speckled hen, who was such a fine layer, stopped her proud cackling in the yard, and marching into the kitchen said to the Farmer's Wife, " I'm come to inform you, ma'am, that I've just laid a beautiful egg," the Farmer paid Tom Cobble his wages, and told him to go.

So back he went to Sally Drake, and spent the time in reading his book, and doing whatever he fancied: such as making the river run backward; and the snow turn to white sugar icing when it fell; and the school-house settle itself in the top of an oak-tree, where the children had to climb through the leaves to their lessons; and Farmer Jolly's sheep on the Downs transform themselves into a flock of white clouds, when the Butcher came to fetch them away, that rose bleating softly into the blue summer sky, and after a short while dis-

appeared. But after that, every now and again, when the white clouds came sailing over Shortways, one of them might be heard to bleat as it passed, and the villagers would tell each other, " There's one of Jolly's sheep going by."

In due course Tom completed the seventh year of his return from Fairyland, and to all intents and purposes was twenty-one years old.

CHAPTER V

ON his birthday, as he was walking by the river, he saw kneeling in the grass a pretty girl who did not belong to the village. She wore a silver frock that glistened in the sun, but over it a check apron was tied; her hair hung loose from a wreath of stars, and on top of this was a sprigged sunbonnet. She had a little trowel in her hand, and was busy weeding the buttercups that grew thick on the river-bank. Wherever she pulled up a weed a gold ring was left in the ground, so that the wild meadow was sprinkled with enough to marry all the maidens of Shortways three times over. Tom looked at her for a bit and then said, "Good-morning."

"Good-morning," said the pretty girl, driving in her trowel.

"What are you doing?" asked Tom.

"I'm weeding the world," said the pretty girl.

"It'll take some time," said Tom; "wait a bit!" He looked in his brown book, plucked a spire of purple loosestrife, waved it three times, and every weed in the meadow immediately disappeared; but at the same time the buttercups turned blue.

The pretty girl looked vexed. "There's my job gone," said she, "and just see what a mess you've made of things. Blue buttercups indeed! It's not nature."

"No," said Tom, "it's magic."

Ooney weeding the world.

" I hate magic," said the pretty girl. " It spoils a body's jobs."

" It saves a lot of time," said Tom.

" What for ?" said the pretty girl. " Time's got to be spent somehow." She rose from her knees, looked at Tom, and said, " Why, to be sure, you're Tom Cobble !"

" And you are Ooney," said Tom. " You're still sixteen years old, I see, though seven years have passed."

" Minutes," said Ooney. " Why, 'twasn't ten minutes back since you walked off with my Father's book, but haven't you grown in the time !"

" What have you come for, Ooney ?" said Tom. " You can't have the book."

" *Bother* the book !" said Ooney. " It always spoiled my fun. If you want to know, Tom Cobble, I'm out of sorts with my own folk, and I've come to get stolen by the humans. Believe me, Tom, you people aren't one whit more curious about Fairyland than we are about Shortways; so I'll just step up to the village and let somebody catch me."

She nodded to him and tripped away, and Tom saw no more of her that day. But next morning, happening to pass the Garland Inn, he saw Ooney wiping mugs behind the bar, with Harry Blossom showing her how. " Ye'll soon get the hang of it," said Harry Blossom, " but 'twould be better, my dear, if ye could keep 'em from filling with rose-leaves and pearls after ye've wiped 'em dry—it only makes work twice over."

" I'll try," said Ooney, " but one can't get rid of one's upbringing all in a moment. There's Tom Cobble at the door. Come in, Tom, and have a drink. I'm maid-of-all-

work at the Inn here, now, for the Missus caught me nicely with her clothes-line yesterday evening, and so I'm stolen safe and sound and can't go back to Fairyland for seven years. What will you have?"

"I'll have a ginger-pop," said Tom.

Ooney ran for a bottle, and undid the wires with great care, and the cork popped up to the ceiling, and a sky-rocket popped after it and dropped coloured rain all over the sanded floor.

"Try again," said Tom.

So she fetched another bottle and tried again, and the

cork popped as before, but when Ooney went to pour out the drink there was another cork in the bottle; and however often she drew it, there was always a cork to take its place.

" Third time's lucky," said Tom, and Ooney hoped it would be. The third cork came out quietly, and the ginger-pop foamed into the mug; and as soon as the froth was settled Tom saw the whole of his past and future life reflected in the clear drink. However, that didn't trouble him, and he drank it down and enjoyed it.

Ooney said, " That will be threepence, please;" and Tom, who never had any money, picked up a pinch of sawdust from the floor, and changed it into threepence and gave it her. Ooney shook her head and said, " Oh, this magic ! will you *never* learn to do things in the ordinary way ?"—and put the pennies in the till, where they immediately began to spin themselves, one fall down t'other come up, till closing time.

Ooney served her seven years at the Garland Inn, but the whole story of it would take too long to tell you. During this time Sally Drake, who was nearly eighty years old, and as spry as forty, continually plagued Tom to stop messing about with things and get some sensible work to do, and Tom always answered, " Wait a bit, there's no hurry." When, however, Jack Drake took it into his head to marry a wife, and emigrate to Surrey, Tom Cobble, happening to meet the Duke in the Park soon after, offered himself as Head Keeper.

The Duke, who lived on the other side of the Park, five miles off from Shortways, knew nothing of the queer things going on there, and did not suspect that Tom was the cause of his horned rabbits, and his winged deer, and his own golden

boots, for which he had had to have a special wing built by now in the Castle; so he gave Tom the post, " for," said the Duke, " I expect you know the ways of the Park by now."

" I expect I do," said Tom.

When he told the news to Sally Drake, she sniffed and tossed and said nothing; she had her own opinions, and she kept them to herself. When grapes began to grow on the beech-trees, and the primroses in the ash-copse grew twenty feet tall, and the squirrels in the King's Oak began to chatter in Chinese, it was none of Sally Drake's business if the Duke didn't know why. The village cronies over their cups told each other from day to day what new wonder had happened in the Duke's Park, and Ooney behind the bar heard everything, and had no patience with it.

" There's no sense in it at all, "said she, polishing the pint-pots. " Why can't the boy do his work like an ordinary mortal?" And she put the pint-pots on the shelf, where they all turned into Toby Jugs.

Ooney, as you see, was very scornful of Tom Cobble, for he was trying to do the very things in Shortways which she had run away from Fairyland to escape. And Tom, for his part, thought Ooney a little silly to object to all the things that made life different, and to prefer to cook the dinner on a stove rather than leave it all to a magic tablecloth. So during her seven years' service as maid-of-all-work at the Garland Inn, Ooney gave Tom the go-by, and he did the same to her. They had no use whatever for each other's ways.

Ooney was a good girl, and determined to make herself thoroughly useful; there was nothing she wasn't ready to turn a hand to, cooking or cleaning, dusting or sweeping,

brewing or baking, or feather-bed-making. She helped in the garden, and looked after the chickens, and washed on Monday and ironed on Tuesday. She filled the lamps, and fed the dog, and served behind the bar; she was always sweet-tempered and never tired, and the Missus said she would have been a Treasure, but——

The fact is that, for all her willingness and busy-ness, there was never a job Ooney undertook that didn't end up different from the way it set out. If she put a cabbage into the pot, it came out porridge; when she cleaned the step, the customers who trod on it stuck fast until they had granted the Missus her first request; when she swept and dusted a room, there was always a litter of silver pennies left behind her broom and her brush; when she brewed the ale, it turned into golden syrup; when she baked a pie, it was sure to contain at least one singing blackbird; and when she made a feather-bed, it flew to Arabia with whoever next slept on it.

When she dug for potatoes, she turned up chocolate creams.

When she gathered the new-laid eggs, before she could get them to the house they changed into Easter Eggs with presents inside them.

When she washed the sheets they turned into table-napkins, and when she ironed the napkins they turned into pocket-handkerchiefs.

When she filled the lamp, it gave out moonshine.

When she fed the dog, he got a dragon's tail.

When she served the drink, you know what happened.

So at the end of the seven years the Missus said to her, "Ooney, you must go."

" Oh, Missus !" said Ooney, and her eyes filled with tears, " couldn't you keep me ?"

" Your time's up," said the Missus, " and your place is wanted. You're a good girl, Ooney, but fairies' ways aren't Shortways' ways, and what between you and Tom Cobble we're getting the talk of Sussex."

" Me and Tom Cobble ?" cried Ooney, very hurt. " Why, Missus, you'd never make a pair of us two ? Tom Cobble never tried to do a useful thing in his life, and even his magic is left-handed, because my Father blew on his eye before he went away. But oh, Missus, I do try so hard to do jobs and be useful !"

" I know you do," said the Missus, " but your jobs are as left-handed as Tom Cobble's magic, and for all I can see there's nothing to choose between you. No, Ooney, my dear, I can't keep you any longer, and I'm sorry I ever stole you. You may take with you, for a present, anything you fancy that will go into your pocket."

" Then I'll take the Garland Inn, Missus," said Ooney— and before you could say Jack Robinson ! the Garland Inn had dwindled to the size of a money-box, with bar and kitchen and bedrooms all complete; and Ooney popped it into her apron-pocket and went back to Fairyland.

CHAPTER VI

THE day of Ooney's departure Tom came in to tea at the Lodge as usual, and found the Missus of the Garland Inn sitting with Sally Drake by the fire, wringing her hands and telling her tale.

"And what I'm to do for a living, Mrs. Drake, I'm sure I don't know," said she. "The Duke'll never put me up another Inn to take its place. Ah dear, dear, dear! to think of him with his Castle ten times as big as any one man needs, even if he does have to house nine-and-ninety servants to see to his wants. There now, if he could only spare me a little bit of what he's got, I could set myself up again."

"Wait a bit," said Tom Cobble, "and don't worry, Missus." And he got out his book and buried his nose in it.

Sally Drake said sharply, "Put that there reading away, uncle, and sup your tea."

"There's no hurry," said Tom Cobble, and poked the fire three times and said something to the poker. Then he had his tea, and when the Missus got back to the village she saw a quarter of the Duke's Castle planted where the Garland Inn had stood, and two or three villagers standing about it waiting for a drink.

Now the Duke had overlooked a good many things, such as the grapes and the primroses and the squirrels, and a fountain of wine that appeared one day in the middle of his ornamental lake; and when the stone Cupid there took to singing "Ring-

a-ring-a-roses " at seven o'clock every evening and sat down with a splash at the finish, and when the white swans began to wear gold crowns on their heads, and every water-lily as it opened had a Queen-cake inside it, he was really rather proud of it, though he couldn't understand it in the least; and he took all his best visitors to see the swans, and listen to the Cupid, and eat Queen-cakes to their hearts' content. But when a quarter of his Castle, including the armoury, disappeared bodily one day, leaving his own suite of apartments open to the east wind, he felt that things had gone too far, and he must take steps.

So he told his Steward to make inquiries, and a week later the Steward reported that he'd heard there was a rumour of a portion of a Castle, but of course he couldn't say whose, that had strayed by accident into Shortways; so the Duke got on his horse and rode to see for himself, and sure enough there was the missing bit. It now had a nice sign hanging out, with a picture, and the words " The Quarter-Castle " painted on it; and the Missus was serving drinks in the Armoury, using the helmets as pint-pots.

He called her out, and pointed at the building, and said, " Where did you pick that up, Missus ? "

She curtseyed and replied, " Please, your Grace, it's Tom Cobble's doing."

" Send for Tom Cobble," said the Duke; and when Tom came he asked, " Is this your doing, Cobble ? "

" Yes, sir," said Tom Cobble.

" Is this your only doing, Cobble ? " said the Duke.

" No, sir," said Tom.

The Duke discovered he was riding a large white kitten.

" Did you do the swans, and the lilies, and the fountain, and the squirrels, and all the rest of it, Cobble?" said the Duke.

" I did, sir," said Tom.

The Duke frowned a mighty frown, and said in a voice of thunder, " What do you think should be the fate of the man who spoils the Duke's Park and steals the Duke's Castle?"

" I think, sir," said Tom, " that he should marry the Duke's daughter."

" I haven't got a daughter," said the Duke. " Take a month's wages, and go. You're spoiled as a mortal, Tom Cobble, and no use to Shortways."

He paid Tom his wages and rode away, and was so upset that he was quite half-way home before he discovered that he was riding on a large white kitten with blue eyes.

Tom pocketed his money, said good-bye to the villagers and Sally Drake, and left Shortways for ever. He hadn't gone far before he heard a sound of sobbing on the high-road; and there was Ooney in her silver dress and check apron, crying her eyes out under a hedge. So he sat down in the grass beside her, and said, " What's up?"

" Oh, Tom!" wept Ooney, " they've turned me out. I set up the Garland Inn so nice and proper, and did everything there as I'd learned how of the Missus, and tried to get them to come in regular for drinks like real human beings, and they didn't like it at all. I was spoiled for a fairy, they said, and no use to Fairyland any more, so they gave me a wish and told me to go."

" Where's the wish?" asked Tom.

" On the tip of my tongue," said Ooney.

" It's better than nothing," said Tom, " so let's come along together, and see if we can't find a place in the world after all."

He had hardly said this when there was a sound of drums and trumpets on the road, and round the corner, gorgeous in the sunlight, came the long procession of Carlo's Circus—black-and-white ponies, red-and-white clowns, ladies in spangles, boys in pink tights, Indians on elephants with feathers in their turbans, a Strong Man with a starry world upon his shoulders, and Prince Carlo himself in a golden chariot drawn by six white donkeys with red reins and tassels.

" Is it magic ?" asked Ooney.

" No," said Tom, " it's the real thing."

" Really real ?" cried Ooney joyfully. " Oh, I *wish* Prince Carlo would give us a job !"

No sooner had she wished than Prince Carlo said: " Whoa !" to his donkeys, stepped down from his chariot, and said:

" Do you happen to be looking for a job ?"

" Yes, we do," said Tom and Ooney in one breath.

" Well," said the Prince, " my Strong Man's just leaving me to get married to my Lady Equestrienne, and if *you* " (he turned to Tom) " think you could juggle with the world, and *you* " (he turned to Ooney) " can ride a cream pony on one toe and jump through a paper hoop, I'll take you on."

It was settled then and there, and Tom Cobble and Ooney joined the Circus. And before long, wherever it went, they became the chief attractions.

For Ooney in her silver dress and wreath of stars rode the pony like a moonbeam floating in mid-air, sometimes for-

getting to stand on him even on tip-toe, and flying a few inches above his back all round the ring, so that the little boys and girls on the twopenny benches screamed for joy.

And Tom Cobble in pink tights and a gold belt played with the starry world as no Strong Man had ever done before, and while he tossed and caught it, and walked on it and balanced it, all sorts of lovely things happened to it; skylarks and swallows darted from it as it rolled in the sawdust, and filled the tent with twittering, or violets and peardrops fell from it as it tossed on the air, and sprinkled the twopenny benches, and the stars would dance on its surface and turn all sorts of colours, so that the little boys and girls screamed louder than ever.

In time Tom Cobble married Ooney, and when Prince Carlo retired they took the Circus over entirely, for the life exactly suited them.

"Thank goodness," said Tom, "nobody minds *what* magic you play in the Ring!"

And "Thank goodness," said Ooney, "I'm doing something real at last!"

If ever their Circus comes your way, don't miss it.

MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

MERCHANT Adventurers off to the East,
What are you trading?
Leather and cheese and golden grain,
Some for Russia, and some for Spain.
A hundred hides for the Zuyder Zee,
Twice as many for Lombardy,
And tin for the ports of Flanders.
Sacks of sea coal ten times ten,
Wool to sell to the weaver men,
With a cask of cider now and then
To cheer the Merchant Adventurers.

And what will your ships bring home to port,
Merchant Adventurers?
Pepper and cinnamon, wine and wheat,
Spice from Egypt, cloves from Crete,
Syrian silks of purest white,
A freight of fur from the Muscovite,
And anything else you want, sir!
And plenty too, but you've forgot
Your ships may sink and your cargoes rot,
Peradventure they will—peradventure not—
Much venturing Merchant Adventurers!

Merchant Adventurers.

BROTHER BLAISE

HERE sits Brother Blaise
All his days
With paper, paint and pen.
So aged is he, so cramped with age,
He seldom stirs, and turns a page
But now and then.
His eyes are set
On massive book of brave design
Whereon his hand makes, line by line,
Its curious alphabet.

The years go by (so slow
Their come and go
Time scarcely moves at all);
Only the Sun through some high window peeps
To mark the stealing hours, and creeps
From wall to wall.
It's strange to think
That scribe and script must soon forgotten be—
And all his industry
But faded ink!

HUGH CHESTERMAN.

Brother Blaise.

THE BOWMAN

IT'S jolly to play at Make-Believe
And think what you might have been:
An Anglo-Norman aristocrat
With his feudal this and his feudal that;
A stern Crusader, tough and tanned,
Jogging along to the Holy Land;
A Roundhead trooper, spick and span,
Yeoman, Knight or Javelin man.
But best of the bunch, as it seems to me,
The jolliest fellow of all was he
Who covered the whole of his six foot three
In a suit of Lincoln green.

Foemen knew the twang of his bow
And bowed them down at the patter
Of dropping arrows, designed to put
The fear of the Lord in Horse and Foot,
(You'll hear them still, wherever you look,
Hissing about in the history book).
But only the laughing bowman knew
Just where they'd go and what they'd do.
For often enough a Knight would find
A hole in his front—and one behind—
And the mess that it made of his peace of mind
Was hardly a laughing matter.

HUGH CHESTERMAN.

The Bowman.

THE BAFFLED BARD

IN the palmy old days when a King went to war
A Minstrel was paid to make songs by the score,
To rhyme and tell stories
Of War and its glories;
He chanted the praises
Of fighting like blazes,
The pleasure of sticking
Your spear in a Viking
(What rapture to tap a
Real Dane on the " napper " !).
He rhymed about rallies,
And sorties and sallies,
And parleys and truces,
And sang their excuses
If either side lost: he piped like a linnet
And rhymed all the time without stopping a minute.

But, between you and me, all this musical prattle
Was easy enough with a nice sounding battle
Like Beaugé or Bampton,
Dundalk or Northampton;
His tongue would go curling
Round Senlac or Stirling,
While " trodden " and " sodden "
Are fine rhymes for Flodden,

The Baffled Bard.

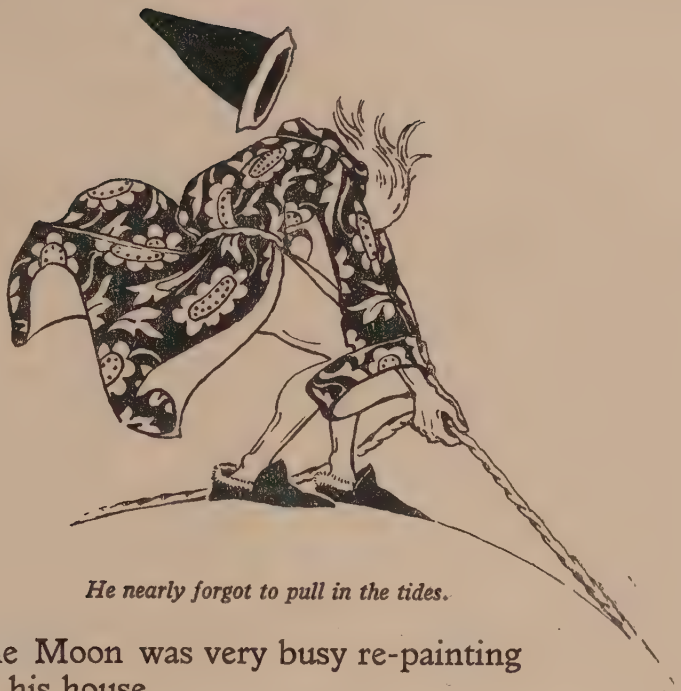
Though I'm bound to confess he
Had trouble with Crecy;
But that's not as hard as
The job that *this* Bard has:
For Uffa the Angle,
Has just had a wrangle
With Sleddha the Saxon—Oh, didn't they go it!
And Wiht-gara-burh was the Battle (poor Poet!).

HUGH CHESTERMAN.

M BALLANCE.

THE MAN IN THE MOON

By ROSE FYLEMAN



He nearly forgot to pull in the tides.

THE Man in the Moon was very busy re-painting the outside of his house.

It was a fine clear night, and of course it's always pretty light up there anyway. He had a ladder and a pail of luminous paint. The paint was bright yellow, and he put it on thick. While he painted he sang, very loudly and cheerfully. This was the song he sang:

Oh, I am the Man in the Moon;
Won't you visit me soon?
Should you be taking a trip to the stars
Please drop in on the way to Mars,
Morning or afternoon.

I am the Man in the Moon;
Put on your seven-league shoon.
The road is plain and you can't go wrong;
Or if you think it would take too long,
Why not have a balloon?

I am the Man in the Moon
(How do you like my tune?)
I'll give you a platter of good moon-cheese
Ripe and rich and as much as you please,
Crystal fruit from my orchard trees,
And silver honey from silver bees
To eat with an ivory spoon.

Presently Diana, his wife, came to the door.

"Mind the paint, Di," said the Man in the Moon.

"That's just what I *do* mind," said his wife. "They're threatening to turn us out of the house because we can't pay the rent, and you can find nothing better to do than to waste your time over an unnecessary job like that. And all the children wanting new shoes too! It's scandalous. I'm not so young as I was, else I've half a mind to buckle-to myself and go out a-hunting again."

"I'd love to see you," said the Man in the Moon. "I'd just *love* it. It would seem like old times. My dear, you'd create an enormous sensation."

"And that's just like your foolishness again," said his wife. "I couldn't even so much as get into the things, let alone run about in 'em. No, I've got some sense, if you haven't. As to painting the house, I can't imagine what you're doing it for."

"My dear," said the Man in the Moon (whose name by the way is Tobias), "if you'll wait a minute I'll come down and tell you."

He climbed down the ladder and sat down on a low cloud-bank in front of the house.

" When I've finished," he said, " it'll look so beautiful that everyone will notice. ' Oh, do look at the moon,' they'll say. ' Isn't it lovely ?' And then I shall paint a big sign and put it on the roof. And I shall write on it: ' CHEESE FOR SALE.' You know, Diana, there's no end to the cheese. The cellar's one solid mass, and we could dig some out of the walls. They're very thick. And everyone will rush to buy cheese. It'll become quite the rage. All the sky people will come, and I shouldn't wonder if the earth people came, too, before long. It will be *the* thing to do. We shall make our fortunes in a couple of months."

" And who's going to pay the rent meanwhile ?" said his wife. " The collector's coming to-morrow."

The Man in the Moon looked a little crestfallen. " Oh, something'll turn up," he said. " We'll put him off for a few days. Give him a pound of cheese."

" He's had pounds and pounds already," said his wife. " *That's* no use." And she went in and slammed the door so hard that it began to rain a little.

The Man in the Moon finished the first coat of paint. Then he went to have a look at the tide-ropes in order to see whether they were running out properly, and after that he sat down on the doorstep and lighted his pipe, peering about to see whether the children were coming in.

His wife came to the window.

" Time those youngsters were in, isn't it ?" said the Man in the Moon.

" They're all safe in bed," she said. " All except Seven; she's not back yet. She ought to be home. It'll soon be dawn. Just like you, Tobias, not to see them come in."

Held up a glittering string of beads.

Which was hardly fair, for the Moonbeams had all come in the back way, and they're the quietest little things imaginable.

Five minutes later Seven came softly slipping round the edge of the house.

" Hullo, Daddy," she said.

" Hullo, Seven," said her father, and made room for her on the step beside him, for of all his ninety-nine daughters she is the favourite.

" I've had a lovely night," she said. " And look what I've found."

She held up a glittering string of beads. " It was lying at the bottom of a deep, deep well. There was a big frog in the well and when I danced for him he fetched it out for me. Isn't it pretty ?"

The Man in the Moon took it in his hands. " It *is* pretty," he said. And he turned it about in his fingers. One of the beads slipped off the thread. He threw it up into the air and caught it. It glittered wonderfully in the pale light.

Seven clapped her hands.

" Let's play at marbles with them in the yard," said the Man in the Moon.

But Seven was afraid her mother would see them from the house and send her to bed.

" Then let's throw them at the stars," said her father. " It would be such fun to hit one, and they'll look so jolly flying through the sky."

I danced for him.

Seven clapped her hands again. "Oh, yes, Daddy," she cried.

But her mother heard her and put her head out of the window again.

"Come to bed at once," she said, and she came bustling down the stairs. But when she caught sight of the necklace lying on the step in a shining heap, she became intensely excited.

"Where did that come from?" she asked.

"I found it at the bottom of a well on earth," said Seven. "Isn't it pretty?"

"Well, I never . . . I declare . . . of all the extraordinary things . . ." gasped out her mother. "Give them to me, give them to me. For goodness' sake take care none of them get lost." She gathered up the beads in her apron and rushed indoors, but was out again in a moment, brandishing the evening paper in her free hand. "Listen to this," she said:

SENSATION AT COURT.
FAIRY QUEEN LOSES HER STATE NECKLACE.
SUBSTANTIAL REWARD TO FINDER.

And she showed them the great black head-lines in the Fairy Mail.

"Do you really think it's the Queen's necklace?" said the Man in the Moon, who had been staring at her open-mouthed.

"Of course it is," said his wife rather snappishly. "Anybody could see with half an eye that that's no ordinary piece of jewelry. I shall telephone to the Court immediately. What a lucky thing that Seven found it! I wonder how it came there. I daresay the Queen dropped it. They say she's dreadfully careless about her things." She hurried away into the house, and they could presently hear her trying to get through to the Fairy Queen. Seven and her father sat looking at one another rather guiltily. "What a good thing we didn't throw them away," whispered the Man in the Moon. "Don't tell your mother."

By this time all the other Moonbeams were thoroughly aroused. They put their shining flaxen heads out of the windows.

"Come up, Seven," they said. "Have you heard? We're all to have new slippers. And Mother's promised to take us for a picnic to the Milky Way to-morrow. Come up and tell us all about the necklace."

Dear me! What a state of excitement they were all

in! The Man in the Moon very nearly forgot to pull in the tides, and that would have been a catastrophe indeed.

I know you will be pleased to hear that it did turn out to be the Fairy Queen's necklace, and the reward was an exceedingly handsome one, so that the children got not only new slippers but a new Sunday frock apiece. There was enough over besides to pay the rent for a year, and even something to put by for a rainy day.

But the Man in the Moon hasn't given up his wonderful plan of selling cheese. I heard the other day that he was very busy painting his sign. So look out for it, won't you?

POEMS

By B. K. PYKE

THE DREAM

ALL up the mountains,
All down the vale
Ran Pretty Polly,
Chased by a snail.

Down where the streamlet
Flowed to the sea
Ran Pretty Polly
Fast as could be.

Then our poor Polly,
Turning her head,
Found she had fallen
Out of her bed.

Alec Buckels

" Chased by a snail."

Alec Buckels

FRIENDLESS

I WANT a wiry pony
With a wild dark mane,
Who'd gallop me
To Anglesea
An' then come home again.

I want a yellow doggie
With a wet black nose,
Who'd bathe with me
At Anglesea
An' lick my little toes.

B. K. Pyke.

Alec Buckels

JOHNNY MUNNS

HARK to the wailing !
'Tis poor Johnny Munns
Calling for apples
And sugary buns.

B. K. Pyke.

Alec Buckels

RESPECTABLE PEOPLE

IT'S very nice to eat your tea,
As Mother does, in company.
But oh, I think it better far
To grab for jam straight from the jar.
And if they send me up to bed
At least I go there feeling fed.

B. K. Pyke.

Roy Melbourne

PARSON'S TWINS

By HALLIWELL SUTCLIFFE

CHAPTER I

OLD Ben Rossiter's cottage lay in a hollow of the cliff, where the heather ran down to the gorse, and Ben was sitting at his door in the evening sunlight, spinning yarns to the boy and girl who lay stretched at ease, their elbows in the heather and their chins in their hands as they watched Rossiter's face.

Ben could remember much that had happened in the wildest days of Norland village—could invent when memory failed—and of all listeners he liked best these two who were known as Parson's Twins to all the fisher-folk. They were twins in looks, though Nora's face was like an elf's and the boy's was hardened by the free life of the coast. They were certainly twins in what Ben called "sheer devilment, just for love of it."

"As I was saying, there *was* a deal of smuggling in these parts, Master Dick. The best o' them all, to my mind, was Black Garrowby, who hailed from Neasby-over-Bay yonder, though we can scarce see the headland now. True, there's bad weather coming. It's getting grey with the sundown."

" But Black Garrowby ?" asked Dick.

" Nay, it would fright Miss Nora here, if I told all I knew."

" I like to be frightened, Ben. It tingles all down my back."

" Well, this was the sort of lad he was, if you must know. There was a Preventive chap—name of Glendyke—and there wasn't much love lost 'twixt him and Black Garrowby. No, there wasn't much love lost."

He paused to shift his quid of baccy from the left cheek to the right.

" They met on the cliff-top one moonlight night," he went on. " The Preventive came on Garrowby just as he climbed up-cliff with a keg of brandy on his shoulders. There was a big moon rising over the moor, so they saw each other, plain as daylight almost. And the Preventive says to Garrowby, ' We're quits at last,' says he. ' We are,' says Black Garrowby, and runs in and gets t'other's cutlass out of his hand."

Ben shifted his " wad " from the right cheek to the left. He liked to keep these two waiting, breathless, till he took up his tale again.

" As I said, the moon gave a fairish light to see by. Garrowby swung the cutlass twice, and then he clove the Preventive right through neck and all. And the head of the man bumped over-cliff, bumped down from rock to rock, it did, till all the sea-mews came out clattering to know what had tumbled in among 'em."

" Nothing happens like that nowadays," sighed Nora.

" It's as well, may be. It does seem outrageous—the head of a man waking sea-birds from their sleep—and it couldn't happen now, of course."

Ben Rossiter glanced out to sea again, and his voice was sharp on the sudden.

" There's dirty weather coming, so get home before you're drenched. Parson has enough to say to me as it is about filling your heads with tales best forgotten."

Dick was still sprawling in the heather, his eyes intent on Ben Rossiter. So Raleigh, in old Devon days, might have looked at the weathered sea-dogs of his time.

" Father is over at the Island," he said, " and told us he couldn't get back till late. There's plenty of time for another tale."

" Bless the boy, what sort of yarn does he want now?"

" A wrecking tale. They used to put lights on Norland Cliff to bring ships on the rocks."

" To be sure they did," broke in the old man gruffly, " but I like to forget all that. Smuggling was smuggling, fair and square. But to 'tice a good ship on the reef, and break her timbers, and drown the sailor-men aboard of her—it don't bear thinking of."

" What sort of light did they use, Ben?"

" Why, just a storm-lantern. When a ship's in trouble on a black night, a littlish light on the cliffs shows very plain."

" And nothing happens like that, either, nowadays," said Nora, with the same wistful sigh. " It must have been fine to live then. Fancy the ship breaking up on the reef, the very minute the Preventive's head bounded down—and Black Garrowby laughing on top of the cliff while he danced a jig."

" It wasn't fine to live then," said Rossiter, " for *I lived then myself*, and I know. And now pack home, the two of you. There's no more yarns to-night."

They went reluctantly, knowing this mood of his. Rossiter watched them fade and dwindle into twilight of the heather, and wondered if he'd been harsh. A storm-lantern on the cliff—a broken ship below—it was all like an old-time story to Parson's Twins. He should have been gentler with them, for they loved a tale.

He turned to look at the sea, churning into grey little ponies that would be white horses later on. On such a night as this he had seen terrible things, heard dreadful cries, and could not forget. Then he seemed to hear Nora's voice again, saying that nothing happened like that nowadays. Rossiter knew that it might happen any time. Hard times had come to Norland village, and men were saying openly that if one way of earning bread-and-butter failed, another must be found.

"Old tales are well enough," he grumbled. "I don't want new ones of the Wreckers' kind."

CHAPTER II

THE Parson's twins were out on the moor by now, and Dick began to laugh.

" I'm not going home yet, Nora. You're a girl, of course, and can if you like."

" Thank you, Dick, for nothing at all."

" Father can't be home for a long while yet. Of course, old Rossiter made a tale about the cutlass and the head bumping down the cliffs. But there *was* a Black Garrowby, and they say his ghost walks where he killed the Preventive man. I'm going to see."

" So am I," said Nora, and marched very bravely by his side till they neared the top of Norland Point. Then she slipped an arm into his, and explained that she was not afraid, but tired.

" Black Garrowby will cure you of that," Dick assured her. " You couldn't be tired, watching him kill the Preventive, and dance a jig for joy."

She clung closer to him. The sea-fret sobbed and moaned below. The gulls were restless, crying in their sleep. Long as they watched for Black Garrowby's ghost, it did not come; but something else did.

Just behind them, a little glen ran down to the shore, and a man's voice sounded—almost under their feet, it seemed. The breeze, blowing stiff from the sea, brought the words clearly and drowned Nora's startled cry.

"What I says is, it was the staple trade of these parts not so long since. The great folk at the Hall were in it. The Parson was in it. So was every mother's son about the parish."

"Ay," came a second voice. "The sea's good harvest, they used to call it."

"Well, what was good harvest in those days is good harvest now, I reckon. You know how times are with the other sort of fishing, Jake?"

"Know?" growled the second voice.

"But you don't—not by a long way. If you'd a wife and childer, and you saw their faces when you came home with empty nets and empty pockets—you'd *begin* to know."

Parson's Twins lay still in the heather, looking down into the shadowed glen. The two who talked there were no ghosts; but they frightened them, as Black Garrowby could never have put fear into them. They did not know what the men's talk meant, but they half guessed it.

"I haven't wife or childer," Jake's voice came up the breeze. "I haven't a quid o' baccy in my cheek, either. Queer times, I call 'em, when sailor-men can't smuggle baccy, and can't afford to buy it."

"The storm's brewing up. There'll be ships making for the bay before so very long."

"Foreign ships, we'll hope?"

"Oh, ay, they'll be foreign ships. And we'll hope, too, the crew will swim ashore. It's only the cargo we're sinking, Jake—to feed our wives and childer."

"Dick," whispered Nora, "I'm afraid."

The two men passed close to the Twins.

He reached out a hand to hers, and held it close. " Not you," he said; " and anyway we've got to listen."

" It's a rare devising, this o' yours," sounded Jake's voice, harsh and rough. " You've got the lantern with you ?"

" Would I forget a little thing like that ? We've got the lantern and the weather, Jake, and it's time we stepped up-cliff."

The two men passed so close to Parson's Twins that they nearly trod on them.

The twins stood stock-still for a moment. Without warning they were pitched headlong into the times they had sighed for —times come to life again. Two men—rough men and real—were going up to Norland Point, where the cliffs rose, iron-bound and sheer, a thousand feet. This was no story listened to at the door of Rossiter's cottage. Live men were going to the point with a lantern, and soon a light would flash out across the gathering storm.

Nora felt Dick's hand tighten on hers as he dragged her forward. It was an awful thing that had met them on the cliff. Every story they had heard of wrecking days returned in a flash of memory.

" What can we do ?" sobbed Nora. " They're so big."

" We can follow," Dick broke in roughly. " That's all I know."

The whole top of Norland Point was rough with boulders and thick heather, and Dick, when they reached it, went on hands and knees, creeping forward like a weasel.

Nora, close behind him, lost her fright. The smell of the heather was friendly, and so was the cover it gave them as they crept forward. Dick was in front of her, too, and it was com-

forting to know that fear never made him feel very thin and cold, as it did a girl.

Dick's heart was in his boots, if she had known it. For they had wriggled now so close to the edge of Norland Point that they could hear the two men talking. And it was eerie talk.

"There's none to see," laughed Jake.

"None to see, lad," growled the other. "Just a home-light on the cliff, and a ship scudding safe for harbour."

"And *crack* she comes against what lies under us. Then we douse our light, and who is the wiser when we come down shore to-morrow for our share of the wreck?"

"It's a foreign ship will come, you said?"

"To be sure, a foreign ship."

"And the sailor-men will swim ashore?"

Dick, used enough to the free speech of the village, was aghast at the oath that Jake ripped out.

"Afraid o' the business, are ye?"

"Not afraid, as you might say," stammered the other; "but it's only the cargo we want."

"Ay, and it's the cargo we'll have, at any price. I've a wife and six starving brats down yonder, and they have to be fed. Here, give me the lantern. Your hands are quavering so they couldn't shield a match to light it—not against this Wreckers' Wind that's blowing up."

Dick lay in a little tunnel of heather—lay much as he had done when he listened to Old Rossiter's tales not long since—and saw the lantern shoot its rays out into the grey weather brewing up across the twilight sea. And for a moment his heart failed him.

CHAPTER III

"NOT so scared as you were?" he heard Jake say. "It used to be everyday work, I tell you. Parson and Squire and all Norland were in the traffic once. They'd be in it to-day, if they'd wit to do like us, without risk o' being found out."

The horror of it came afresh to Nora. Before she knew, a sharp cry escaped her. It seemed that she was compelled to cry aloud in warning to any sailor-men who might be steering for the light on Norland Point. Then she heard another oath from Jake, and Dick's voice in her ear.

"We've got to run for it now, little fool."

They could not run for it yet, but had to wriggle back through heather drenched already by the wet sea-wind. Then they turned the shoulder of a rock, and waited breathless in its shelter, listening to the two men as they hunted for them. They dared not stand upright, dared not creep out into the grassy open; for there was light enough to show them plainly.

To and fro the searchers went. Once Jake was so near their hiding-place that they thought he must hear their hurried breathing; but he passed on, kicking the heather to right and left as if he was intent on bolting a hare from its forme.

"May be it was a cliff-bird screeching," he growled. "There's nobody here as I can find."

"And may be it was Black Garrowby's spirit a-calling us," quavered the other. "He calls for death, as all men know."

" Don't you talk of what men know, Silas," said Jake, with bitter fury. " Get home to your mammy, and leave me to a man's job. I'll have no babbies hindering me."

Dick guessed, by the sound of their voices, that they were on the far side of the rocks. He whispered to Nora, and together they crept quickly through the last of the heather, turned for a backward glance when they reached the smooth turf beyond, and never ceased to run till they slid down into the glen where they had heard Jake hatching out his plot not long ago.

Here they found breath again; but the wind came up the hollow with sudden fury, and Dick thought of the lantern on the cliff—of ships at sea.

" It's half a mile to old Rossiter's cottage, Nora," he said. " Get there as fast as you can."

She drew closer to him. " You're coming, too?"

" I can't. There's just a chance I can get that light away from the cliff. It isn't much of a chance. That's why you have to go to Rossiter's. Tell him what's doing up at the Point."

Nora pictured the half-mile to the cottage—every step of it thick with ghosts and twilight—and clung to him.

" Cry-baby, like the man Jake sneered at?" said Dick, and hated himself for the needed roughness.

She stood away from him, in the glen's windy dusk, her pride on fire. " I'll go," she said.

The wind buffeted her as she came to the open cliff-top. It was rising fast, and made queer noises—sometimes like hounds in full cry, pursuing her—sometimes like a pack of

goblins. A lull came when she reached Tranter's Heath, and from its stunted firs she heard the clanking of a chain.

Panic seized her. She could not take another step through this ghost-ridden upland, and her heart cried out for Dick. Twin seldom cries to twin in need without a quick answer. As if he were close at hand, she heard Dick telling her that sailor-men were in peril on the sea, and that they needed her.

She plunged into what waited for her under the firs. The clanking of chains ceased, and she ran into something big, and soft, and furry—something that brayed gently at her.

Nora put her arms about the donkey's neck, and cried from sheer relief. The clanking chain was his protest against the master who tethered him to a tree each night on Tranter's Heath to listen to the ghosts. She had forgotten in her terror that he had his sleeping-quarters here.

" Joseph," she sobbed, " I'm tired and frightened."

Joseph rubbed against her cheek, as if to say that he was tired and frightened, too. She stayed with him a little, gathering comfort and giving it, till Dick's voice seemed to run down the wind that rose again and yelped and snarled. *There were sailor-men going in peril of the sea.*

She kissed Joseph's nose with tender haste, and he brayed forlornly as she left him. There was half her journey done when she got beyond the stunted trees and out into the heather-track that led to the beach and Rossiter's cottage; but the way seemed endless. The wind, dead against her, brought her to a standstill every now and then; and once she had to lie flat in the heather and let a hurricane of sleet pass overhead, chilling her to the bone.

Nora, as she struggled on, was not afraid of the storm's fury, but she dreaded the lulls in between—the lulls when

She ran into something big and soft.

she heard strange sobs and wailing cries among the chill, wet heather, and fancied drowning men about her on all sides. Again she called to Dick, and his hand seemed to grasp hers and lead her forward.

Another lull in the wind came, just as she reached Pinder's Gorse. An awful crying sounded from behind, and she saw a man running through the gloom. He headed so straight for her that Nora could only spring aside, and drop to her knees, and creep into the prickly gorse in search of shelter. She lay there, in an agony of dread. He would hunt for her, as the men had sought through the heather not long ago. But Dick had been with her then.

She tried to snuggle closer into the gorse, but the thorns drove her back. So then she lay there, waiting for the end. The man must find her soon, and would kill her—and Dick would be sorry. Somehow it was Dick she thought of. He would miss her.

The man who had helped Jake to set the Wreckers' Light on Norland Point did not pause at Pinder's Gorse. As they watched beside the light, Jake and he, a loathing of it all had come to him, a listening for the phantom tread of Black Garrowby's feet, till he had taken flight across the moor. He, too, had blundered into the grey donkey tethered on Tranter's Heath, had fancied it was Garrowby himself and fled from it.

Nora heard him go past the gorse, crying that all the moor was after him. The wind drowned his uproar by-and-by; and the girl drew a breath of sheer relief. She waited awhile, then crept out into the open. Every step she took was shod with panic, but she came at last to the dip of the moor that showed her Rossiter's cottage, dim in the twilight, and the little land-locked bay in front of it.

It seemed too good to be true, but Rossiter's door was real enough as she fumbled for the handle and opened it. Old Ben was real, too, sitting there beside a blaze of wrack-wood, a clay pipe between his teeth as he watched old days take shape in the dancing flames.

His pipe dropped to the floor as he turned and saw Nora standing in the fire-glow. She was white and shaken, and there was terror in her eyes.

" Why, it's Parson's maid," he said.

She ran to him, and leaped to his knee, and cried her heart out against his tarry coat. " I've been frightened, Ben," she pleaded.

" Well, that's gone. Tuck your head into my elbow-crook, and sleep it all away. It won't be the first time."

She rested there, in the crook of his tarry sleeve, but not for long.

" Dick's calling me," she said, slipping from his knee.

" That's no news. You're for ever calling, each to t'other."

He was for comforting her again; but she was hearing the cries of sailor-men out there.

" Ben," she said, " they've put a lantern on Norland Point. Dick sent me down to tell you — and he's in danger."

Rossiter's easy-going cheeriness left him. " It's come to that, has it? Well, I feared it would."

She watched him reach down a big lantern from the shelf beside the hearth, watched him trim and light it.

Nora was white and shaken still, but she tugged at his sleeve impatiently. " Dick's calling me," she repeated.

She watched him trim and light the lantern.

"You'd best stay here," he grumbled, "but there's no use in argufying when twin calls to twin."

They went out together into the grey dusk. The little bay was quiet enough, but as they turned their backs on it and got up into the high cliff-lands, the gale swept over them in earnest. Whether Nora liked it or not, she felt herself picked up and sheltered under Ben's storm-coat. It was snug and warm there; but she would rather be braving the weather, as Dick was braving it.

Rossiter halted only once, when they came to the headland high above his cottage. He set his lantern in a cranny of the rocks, made sure that it was safe against the gale's fury, and glanced out to sea.

"There's two lights now," he growled, "and even chances for the sailor-men. If they see this first, it 'ull guide 'em straight into that little cove o' mine."

He felt a struggling under his big storm-cape, and Nora's head was thrust out into the wind that lashed and stung. "Hurry, Ben," she pleaded. "Dick's calling me—and he's all alone."

CHAPTER IV

DICK had listened to Nora's footsteps up the glen with a queer heartache. There was no danger that he knew of between the glen-top and Rossiter's cottage—none certainly of the kind he must take—but she was a girl, and there were lonely ghosts on the cliff-top, lying in wait for human company.

He put the thought away, and clambered down the glen till he gained the beach, and turned right-handed for Norland Cliff. Between his feet and the seething flood-tide there was still a strip of rock that ran only inches deep in spume. He crossed it nimbly, slipping here and there on hidden rocks, and just in time reached the great rock-stairway that wound up to Norland Point.

It was a hard climb, even in daylight, for men used to it from boyhood. The sea-worn ledges sloped upward—narrow tracks across the sheer face of the precipice—and Dick was glad that the gale blew shoreward, pressing him against the cliff.

Half-way up he thought he could do no more. His hands were raw with plucking at jagged points of rock to steady himself. His heart was beating madly, and there was a singing in his ears. He had done his best, and this was the end of it.

He looked seaward in despair, and far off he saw a ship in sore distress. The hurricane had driven the sky free of cloudy mist, and a half-grown moon shone clear on waves that reared

in triumph till the wind broke them into tatters. In the midst of churning seas he watched this small ship battling with the storm. Sometimes she was riding mountains high, and then was hidden in a gulf of crested waters. But always she returned, fighting on the wave-crests for her life.

Dick, lashed by the tempest and clinging to the cliff above him, thought somehow of Ben Rossiter—of the days when he and Nora had sprawled at his cottage-door, and listened to high tales of Drake and Frobisher and Howard. But these had been small cattle to Ben when his tongue was loosed about the hardihood of Sir Richard Grenville, fighting his ship against the men of Spain. " Never a mast was left her," Ben had chuckled, " never a mast. She was down to the bare bones of her, that ship of Grenville's, with the seas scuppering over her. The Spaniards swore he'd done enough, and asked him to give in. ' But no,' says he, ' this is an English ship.' "

Again Dick glanced seaward. The little craft, driven fast by wind and sea, was heading straight for the precipice he climbed—straight for the light on top of it. New strength came to him. There was something in remembrance of Sir Richard Grenville that gave him cheer. Out there was another English ship, and it was a race for her life, this climb of his to the cliff-top.

The race was almost ended a moment later, for he set his foot on a loose rock fallen from above. He swayed dizzily above the edge, with a sharp cry of terror. Then the hurricane drove at him and glued him to the cliff. Whatever lives the storm was taking to-night, it had saved one at least.

Just over his head the track broadened, and Dick swung up and rested there to get his wind again. He was roused by an oath that sounded overhead as the gale, too, paused for breath, and was on his feet in a moment. Keeping in shadow of the rock, he looked up, and the moonlight showed him a face so evil and distorted that his heart stood still.

Above him Jake lay flat on the cliff-top, peering down, and again an oath rapped out. "Who's that below there?" he roared.

Then fear went from Dick. He could only think of Richard Grenville and the glee of peril. He made a hollow of his hands and shouted up that Black Garrowby was waiting for his man, and with that Jake's head disappeared, and the gale swooped up again in earnest.

Dick glanced out to sea once more. The little ship was nearer now, still heading straight for what she thought a harbour-light. There was no time to lose, and he crept warily up the last of the climb, and pushed his head between the

Above him Jake lay flat on the cliff-top.

heather. Jake was striving moodily to and fro, stopping often to watch the ship in-driving towards the rocks.

The man was not two yards away, with his back turned, when Dick saw his chance, and took it. He kicked the lantern over-cliff; and then, because his errand was done, the after-fright of it was cold about him. He could not move.

Neither could Jake for a moment. Dread of the thing he was doing had pierced even his tough hide, and the cry from below had shaken him—the cry that Black Garrowby was waiting. The heaven of a wreck, with spoils to gather, was changed to Garrowby's welcome down yonder in the deeps where drowned men lay and knew each other.

In that still moment Jake saw the dead below-seas. They were of two companies—honest sailor-men, and those who had set false lights about the cliffs—and a sick fear was at his heart. There were honest men down there—done to their deaths by such as he—and they would know him when he came among them.

For awhile they stood there, both silent. Then Jake gave a scream of fury—a madman's scream—as his glance returned to the boy who had robbed him of his prey. Dick, roused from his trance of fear, doubled back sharply. There was only one way of escape—the rock-stair he had climbed. If the upward journey had been perilous, it was harder far to go down instead of up the slippery, zigzag path; for now the whole seething waste of sea showed clear below him, and each step seemed to be his last.

He kept the track with dogged will to survive; and, after all, there was worse behind him than the seas in front. Once he paused, listening for pursuit. There was none; but, as he

moved forward warily, a rock came crashing down the cliff and another, and another.

That was Jake's way with him, then; but by this time Dick had reached the bend where the track widened, half of it running into a narrow cave cut like a gash on the cliff's face. He crept into the darkness, and waited, watching the moonlit half of the path. There was a dizziness in his head, a failing of strength that he mistook for want of pluck; but recollection of Ben Rossiter, and Richard Grenville, and scampers overmoor with Nora—all mixed up together—gave him courage. He had outwitted Jake so far; and the little ship, out there in the moonlight, was no longer heading straight for Norland Point. She was tacking, this way and that, uncertain and baffled now the light was gone.

Dick waited. The hurricane died down as suddenly as it had come; but the sea below ran high and boisterous, buffeting the ship. He forgot his own plight in watching her peril, till a voice bellowed from the cliff-top:

"You doused my light, Parson's brat. Have I doused yours?"

Dick warmed to this ending of suspense. He would fight his own little ship till it was drowned down there or come to harbour.

"Ay," he answered, making a trumpet with his hands again. "I've gone to join Black Garrowby."

There came a silence from the cliff-top, and after that a storm of oaths, and then the sound of cautious feet along the track. It was hard to bear, this second waiting-time. The footsteps sounded nearer.

"Where are you, Parson's brat?" snarled Jake. "You don't get me twice with that trick. No ghost of Garrowby's sort goes dousing a Wreckers' Light. He was one of us in the old days."

Dick could smell the man—rum, and sweat, and tar—and he passed so close that he thought himself lost. But Jake went by, looking down the track in search of the lad who'd robbed him.

Then a terrible thing happened. Jake stood stock-still in the moonlight, and a great cry rang out across the heaving seas.

"Black Garrowby," he shrieked, and spread his hands out as if drawn by other unseen hands, and plunged into what lay below in the lockers of old Davy Jones.

Dick crouched there, bewildered by the sudden horror of it all. The sea roared and moaned below, and through its uproar he seemed to hear Jake's death-cry echoing out and out across the tumbled waters. Then a great longing came to him to get away—up and away to the cliff-top and safety and sound of friendly voices.

He left the cave's shelter, and began to climb the moonlit stairway. Then his strength left him. There was no spur of need to get the light away from Norland Point, no spur of fear because Jake pursued. He had done too much, and panic seized him. Strive as he would to force himself up the track, he was helpless. He could only think of the precipice above, the sheer fall below. In an agony of terror he lay flat along the path and tried to dig his finger-nails into the rock. And all about him he heard a never-ending cry of "Garrowby —Black Garrowby."

CHAPTER V

BEN ROSSITER came battling his way with Nora along the cliff-path, after setting his lantern on the cliffs above his land-locked harbour. He could see the other light shining wickedly from Norland Point, and young strength ran in his old veins as he hurried forward. He had ever been a lover of ships that sailed the seas, and murder was in the doing here —murder of the craft struggling gamely out yonder in the tossed havoc of the gale—the craft heading fast as wind could take her to the face of Norland Cliff.

Nora would be carried no longer under shelter of Ben's storm-coat. "As if I was a baby," she said, struggling for freedom. "And Dick would laugh at me."

"It's fierce and gusty. Best stay where you are."

She was so sure of some danger near to Dick—he called so clearly to her—that she fought in earnest to get free.

"Well, have it so, little wild-cat," grumbled Rossiter—"but, Lord love us, you've got to keep a hand fast in mine. This sort o' gale would make no more of you than a fluff o' thistledown."

They went toward the light on Norland Point—the burly man and the little, elf-like maid—and constantly glanced out to sea, where the ship raced for the cliffs.

"Oh, hurry," panted Nora, as she had done at the start of their wild journey.

" I'm hurrying with old bones, and you with young 'uns. Doing my best, I am, like you."

They were running now—running to quench the lantern that glowed on Norland Point—and as they neared it, the moonlight showed them Jake, striding up and down beside his Wreckers' Light. Then they saw Dick start from the heather, and kick the lantern over, and disappear again below the cliff.

" Faster," muttered the old man, watching Jake begin to throw rocks down the precipice.

Before they could reach the Point, Jake himself had disappeared, and under their feet they heard that awful cry ring out, of *Garrowby—Black Garrowby*.

Rossiter felt Nora's hand slip from his grasp. She had come to his cottage not long since, half-fainting from terror of a half-mile journey. Yet now, with the cry ringing in her ears, she seemed to have no fear. Twin called to twin. If one was down and spent, the other must keep heart alive.

Before he guessed her purpose, the girl had slipped away from him and was already down the first steps of the rock-stair. Rossiter had fancied his head too old for precipice work; but he followed Nora without a thought of danger. She was too frail to be left alone with the rough mercies of the rocks.

Stepping gingerly, he turned a corner of the track; and there was Dick, lying face down, and Nora whispering to him. In all his knowledge of these two, he had never understood till now the queer bond that linked them. Dick got to his feet, and swayed unsteadily for a moment. Then, as he saw the girl waver, too, and glance at the heaving seas below, he gripped her hand and led her up the track.

Dick got to his feet.

Rossiter reached down an arm that held them both; and when they stood safe among the heather on the cliff-top, he snapped out a question:

"Where's Jake? I heard him screeching Black Garrowby's name."

"Jake?" said the boy, his voice quiet and awed. "He followed his lantern into the sea. That's all I know about it."

They looked out to sea, all three of them, to know how it went with the little ship, and Rossiter shouted with glee.

"She's not lost any longer—not tacking about as if she'd no soul of her own to be saved. She's heading straight for the light on top of my own cove—and she'll be there before us."

Dick fell silent as they crossed the moor, and Nora pinched his arm.

"Morose?" she laughed, glad to be free of terror and to know the little ship went safe down there where the seas boomed at the cliffs.

"Yes," said Dick. "You found me face down on the rocks—a chit of a girl—and helped me up."

Ben Rossiter laughed again, from his heart upwards. "Oh, bless you, lad, you're young to fear—the sort that goes after storm. Why, there've been times in my seafaring days when I've been nigh sick with fear."

"*You*, Ben?"

"Ay, me—but always before and after a fight—not while it was on, you understand. We're alike that way, Master Dick."

Rossiter saw how it was with the lad, and his whole good-natured soul was set on guiding these two through the after-time that follows adventure such as they had shared to-night. As they went along the cliff-track, Ben hitched his trousers

Old Ben's Story of the Pirate King

and settled the quid of baccy more firmly in his cheek. He was readying himself for a brave tale of what had, or had not happened in the time when he sailed foreign seas.

" It was this way," he began, with Parson's Twins on either side of him, holding his hands tight. " There was a terrible plague of pirates out in the Pacific. They swarmed thick as bees round a honey-pot, and the English Admiral says to me, ' Ben,' says he, ' you've a neat little clipper of your own, and none but you can save us.' ' How's that?' says I. ' Well,' says the Admiral—and a marvel he was to see, in his gold-buttoned coat—' if we get the King of the Pirates, we get the whole gang o' them. What you've to do is to nose him out, wherever his ship happens to be, run up the Black Flag, same as if you were a pirate yourself, and trust to your wits.' That's what Admiral said to me, plain as I'm talking to you now."

" Oh, Ben, go on," whispered Nora, as he paused in the middle of his tale.

" I never could bide to be hurried, as you know. Besides, my memory's not what it was. But, so far as I recall, the mate of my ship—name o' Drinkwater, because he drank so little—said he knew where the Pirate King was skulking. So we went and found him just where Drinkwater had said, in a bay full of crocodiles below and cocoa-nut trees above. You could hear the nuts busting as they fell on top of the crocodiles' thick backs."

" Go on," said Dick, with cheery derision. " Nora believes it all."

" Seeing's believing, as you'll know if you ever come to sail into the Pacific. As I was saying, we found the Pirate King there. His ship was flying the Black Flag, with the skull and cross-bones on it. So was mine."

The tale got no further; for a big, broad-shouldered man came over the moor to meet them. He was drenched from head to foot, and the twins left Rossiter to jump into his arms. Tough as Rossiter was, he felt a sense of awe, somehow, as he understood that Parson himself had sailed in the little ship that was nearly wrecked on Norland Point not long ago.

The Parson was not in the best of tempers. "Why did the men set *two* lights on the cliffs?" he snapped, chilled and tired by the exposure. "We got into the thick of it, coming home from the Island, and made for a cliff-light. Then another light showed to eastward of it."

"Ay," broke in Rossiter. "I'll tell you the tale of it to-morrow. It all came of the twins listening to a sailor-man's tales that you never relished. You'd best get them up to Parsonage, and tuck 'em up in bed. They've done more for you——"

"What have they done?" broke in the Parson.

"That's to-morrow's tale, as I told you."

Rossiter watched them go along the cliffs, and presently Nora came running back to him.

"Ben," she asked, "what happened to you and the Pirate King!"

"That's to-morrow's tale, too," said Rossiter. "It's bedtime, Parson's maid."

MARCH FOR A TOY SOLDIER

I
Am
The great Alexander
Who killed the sly
Goosie Gander—
A bill of gold
And his feet all cold
And the moon for a silvery spoon—all told!
Now each flower-bed
Seems a foreign land
Where I must tread
And as conqueror stand;
And the flower-bells seem
Crowned kings and peoples
And gay bells rung in the
Conquered steeples!

The Great Alexander.

DIRGE FOR A GOLLYWOG

SAMBO is dead.
Though he was black
He had, I said,
Of love no lack.
The green leaves sound
Like the wind in tears:
Lay him in ground
Beside his peers!
We'll bury him under
The cherry-tree,
And the cherries darker
Than ever will be!

EDITH SITWELL.

We'll bury him under
The cherry-tree,

THE LITTLE MUSICAL BOX

WHEN the Queen of China
Took her tea in spring,
From my little music-box
The birds began to sing:
The parrot's was a flowery note
As dark as her locks be—
The nightingale's the moon's tears
That bud in fields of tea.
And the young Queen of China,
So beautiful to see,
Walked like the moon
To a silver tune
Beneath her nutmeg-tree;
And she flew like the singing birds
To pluck me from the air
The moon, a silver nutmeg,
The sun, a golden pear!

EDITH SITWELL

When the Queen of China
Took her tea in spring . . .

PUCK'S MARKET

By MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE

UP amongst the heather,
When the moon is high,
Lamplight in the valley,
Starl'ght in the sky,
Swinging on the bracken
That's bowing to the breeze,
In and out the twinkling stems,
Go the Pharisees.[1]

Ding dong! Ding dong! All across the Down,
Twelve o'clock is striking in Littlehampton Town.
Robin's gone a-marketing with all his merry mob;
"Wares to sell! Wares to sell, on Twelve O'clock Knob!"[2]

Ho Ho! Hey Ho!
Singing all together;
Fool a mortal were to miss
Fairy time and weather.
"Come, you lazy stay-at-homes,
While the moon is bright!
Luck is for the buying
On Midsummer Night!"

Ding dong! Ding dong! All across the Down,
Twelve o'clock is striking in Littlehampton Town.
Heather buds a-bursting! Ling bells all a-bob!
Robin—Robin's calling on Twelve O'clock Knob.

[1] Sussex for "fairies."

[2] Twelve O'clock Knob is a small round clearing amongst the heather on the summit of one of the Sussex hills.

Fern seed! Fern seed!
Shed in Verdley Wood:
An acorn cup to gather it,
And see the measure's good!
Treasured in a kerchief
Lover's lips have kiss'd;
Purse-strings tight as tether-ropes
And not a penny miss'd.

Ding dong! Ding dong! All across the Down,
Twelve o'clock is striking in Littlehampton Town.
There's cow-tails still to tangle and hen-roosts still to rob,
But Puck is out of mischief on Twelve O'clock Knob!

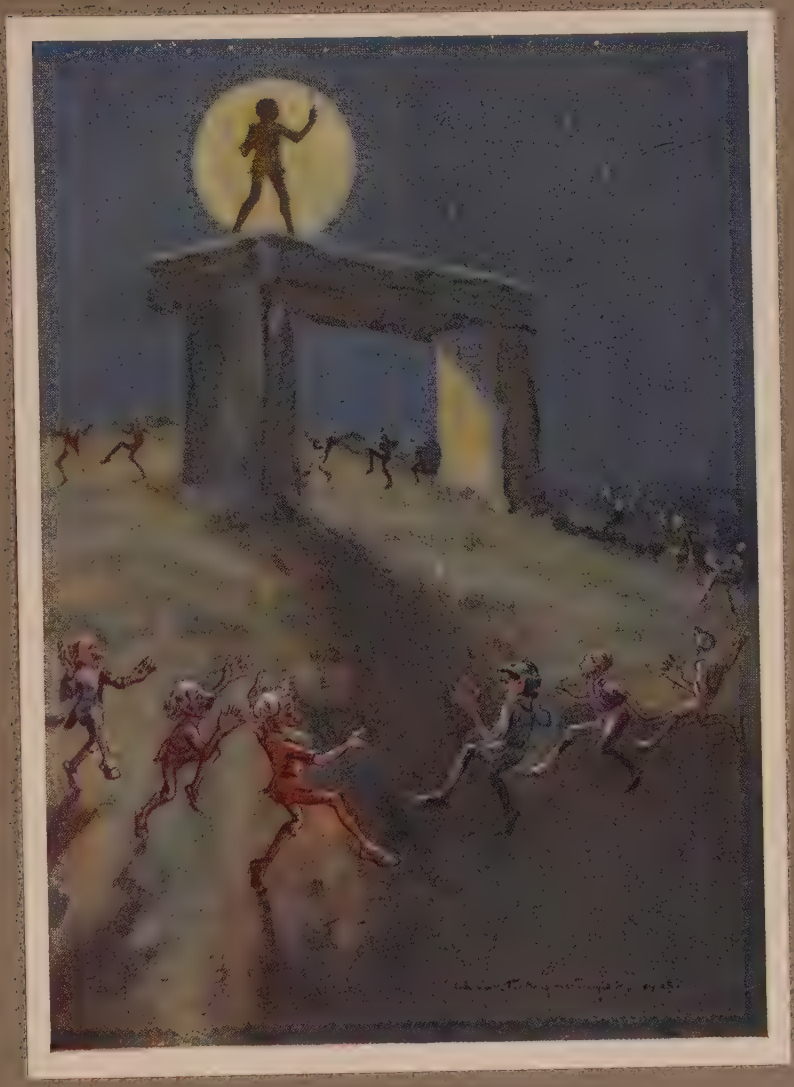
Chimney shadows streaking
Down the sandy street;
Creeping, creeping over them
Stealthy mortal feet;
An acorn full of fairy lore
To trade with fairy men,
But, oh, the wealth you're taking
Before you're home again.

Ding dong! Ding dong! All across the Down,
Twelve o'clock is striking in Littlehampton Town.
And the candles all are guttering at the nightcaps on
the hob,
When Robin traffics magic on Twelve O'clock Knob.

PUCK'S MAGIC *By MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE*

THE common spread in every direction and the road had suddenly disappeared. Moreover, look where he would, things were different. For instance, never before was the common bounded four-square by a high red-brick wall, and if it had been Tony was quite sure there should be doors in it; otherwise you could go neither in nor out. And here on the site of the old lime-kiln a fountain spirted. That too was new, and unusual on any common. Even more unusual was it, that the jet of water shot straight up out of sight, and never came down again, curling, as it went, like a corkscrew, or a watershoot upside down. Beyond the fountain was the white goat. She, at least, was an old friend. Possibly she could explain things. He would go and see.

As he approached she stared at him with a certain importance in her amber-coloured eyes; then butted unexpectedly, and with great shrewdness, so that he bowled over as easily as a ninepin and lay quite flat on the ground. Even then she was not satisfied, but rolled him over on his face, and planting her two forefeet on his back began to beat out a tune



with them. In spite of his great discomfort under the operation, he solemnly gasped out the words—

"Ding dong! Ding dong! All across the Down,
Twelve o'clock is striking in Littlehampton Town.
Robin's gone a-marketing with all his merry mob;
Wares to sell! Wares to sell, on Twelve O'clock Knob!"[1]

Then a sudden crash startled him into wakefulness, and he realised that someone just outside his door had dropped something. It rolled along the boards and bumped the wainscot, so he decided it was probably a candlestick, and as steps passed along the corridor he knew that his father was just going to bed. It would be about ten o'clock then. His back was quite sore between the shoulder-blades where Nanny had stamped on him. No, though! That was a dream, of course. He turned over on his side and then remembered the hair-brush he had lain upon to keep himself awake. Perhaps it was that. He hunted about in the dim light, and it fell upon

[1] *See page* 102.

the floor with so loud a bump, that his heart was in his mouth lest someone should come and demand the cause of the clatter. Everything was quite still, however, as he pulled his little luminous watch from beneath his pillow and studied it. Quarter to eleven. Oh, dear! Why, of all nights, should his father be late upon this one? Well, he must risk it. At least their window faced the other way. There was that in his favour. They would not be able to *see* him.

He slid out of bed, disclosing to the moon and a branch of the big pear-tree which looked in at his window that from the waist downwards he was still fully clothed. Hastily he exchanged his pyjama jacket for his small tweed coat, rebuttoned the neck of his cricketing shirt, and peered out into the garden. It looked very quiet and lonely. A rabbit was sitting up in the very centre of the lawn washing its face with its forepaws, and as Tony cautiously put his legs over the window-sill it whisked off like a streak and vanished into the far hedge of the kitchen garden. Tony smiled to himself. Old Hiram, the gardener, was so fierce on the question of rabbits and

rabbit-wire. All the young wall-flower plants had been nibbled to short bare stumps, so *this* bunny would begin on the lettuces. He let himself down very neatly and quietly to the top of the porch, and glided with considerable skill down its sloping roof till he fetched up with his heels in the gutter of its eaves. Then, a few inches at a time, he worked himself sideways until, clasping the pedestalled corner firmly, he could lower his legs into space. Here they dangled precariously, whilst they felt for and found a post. Down this he slid rapidly and safely to the ground, and, pausing only to wriggle his puckered, twisted garments into place, set off at full speed across the grass. At the gate of the orchard he turned at right angles, running along the thick box hedge out of sight of the house as far as the lane. Following it due west, he reached the main Midhurst road, and struck off across the fields towards Vinings Wood. He was out of breath by now, however, and the rising ground forced him to slacken pace. He steadied down to a walk at last, and as he trudged upwards proceeded for the twentieth time to review the situation.

It all began with the old Mushroom Man.

Now the Mushroom Man, besides being a great personal friend of Tony's, was reputed to be the wise man of the village; though, from his appearance, one would hardly have suspected it. He had a round, red, simple face fringed by a complete circle of short white hair, so that he looked extraordinarily like some rare-hued sunflower when, as often happened, he looked down at you over the wall of his raised garden. His light rather shabby trousers were tied round with string just below the knee and always seemed out of character with his brown velveteen coat; for this was very smart and lent him a kind of superiority over the ordinary villagers. He wore

also a billycock hat on week-days, as did no one else in the district, not even Tony's father. He spoke slowly and carefully, wasting no words—a habit, perhaps, which had earned him his reputation; for this, of course, *is* wisdom, as no one can deny.

Tony was sitting on the stile of the path that leads to Bexley, and accosted the old fellow as he passed.

" Ding dong ! Ding dong ! All across the Down,
Twelve o'clock is sounding in Littlehampton Town,"

he shouted. " Oh, Mr. Hockley, what does Twelve O'clock Knob mean, really ?"

The Mushroom Man came across the grass from the road, and leaned up against the stile-post.

" It's the liddle Pharisees' market-place, surelye, Mas' Tony."

" Tell me," Tony said persuasively, but the old man shook his head.

" I'm noways avised of it, Mas' Tony. You'll best see for yourself."

" How?" the boy questioned.

Mr. Hockley looked furtively round. There was a big tuft of dock-leaves spreading by the gate-post, and he stirred it with his foot as though looking for something that might be concealed beneath. Then he leaned down and whispered in Tony's ear.

" Fern seed," he said.

Tony slid off the stile in his excitement.

" Fern seed? Why, that's what the poem said."

The Mushroom Man nodded his head, not once but many times like a mandarin.

" Fern seed," he repeated. " That's how."

> " Fern seed! Fern seed!
> Out of Verdley Wood:
> An acorn cup to gather it,
> And see the measure's good!"

Tony chanted. " Oh, Mr. Hockley, *do* tell me! Is *that* it?"

The Mushroom man nodded again. Then he swung open the gate beside the stile.

" You come along o' me and I'll tell you," he said.

Tony followed him.

Side by side they crossed the meadow towards Snapelands Copse, and as they walked Mr. Hockley talked. He always

spoke with the soft, sweet intonation of old Sussex, and many of his words and phrases were words and phrases lost or forgotten by any save Sussex folk. Tony understood, because all his life he had lived amongst them, but since perhaps you children who read would not always understand very easily, and sometimes not at all, I am going to tell you in my own words the story that he told. Where he got it from I cannot say, for I have never been able to find it, but it was very real and true to him, and to Tony it has always been very real and true too.

Once upon a time, then, on the cliffs a few miles west of Littlehampton, there stood a fisherman's cottage. It was a poor little place, old, tumbledown and not very weatherproof, so that the wind from the sea used often to find its way through the cracks and crevices. It must have been a rather kind wind, though, for when a baby was born to the humble fisherfolk whose home this cottage was and the wind, having slipped in, was wandering about the room, it often stayed to play round the small head in the old oak rocking-cradle, and the baby would stretch its arms and crow with delight, which it certainly would not have done had the wind been harsh and unpleasant. Indeed, so fond did the little fellow grow of this unseen companion of his that he would lie quiet for hours in his cradle or a chair on the brick path of the garden, provided the wind were there to pat his cheeks and ruffle his downy hair; whereas on a still day he was lonely and lost, and whimpered sorrowfully to his mother as she hung the clothes out, or roared remonstrance if she left him entirely whilst she did her work indoors. As he grew older their intimacy deepened, but because people laughed at him and called him fanciful, he never spoke of it, nor, indeed, allowed people to know he even thought of the wind at all. Nevertheless, when he had finished work

with his father, the boat all clean and neat being drawn high and dry up the beach, and the fish packed ready for their journey to the town, often, instead of playing games with the other fisher-boys, he would wander off by himself miles away, where no one could disturb him. Here, on cliff or shore or inland on the downs, he would be utterly happy and content in HER company alone. That he never thought of her as a man, but always as a woman or a girl was, perhaps, a sign that in some dim measure he understood her. He had, indeed, in his mind a picture of her face, very beautiful and young and simple like a child's.

Then one day a wonderful thing happened. He was lying on his chest on the sands, six miles west of his home, his chin on his hands, his heels swinging in the air behind him, his eyes fixed steadily on the sea. There was a stiff wind blowing from the south (south of south-west he would have said), and it scurried the long billows into line after line of white clouds of foam. Suddenly, amongst them all he caught sight of something floating landwards—a spar, as

he thought, from some forgotten wreck. He watched it, not curiously, but listlessly, for his mind was on other things, until, as it drew nearer, he realised it was not a piece of wood, but a human figure, and that it was not swimming, but seemed to be borne smoothly on the crest of one great unbroken wave. Then, indeed, he *was* curious. He sprang to his feet and ran down to the edge of the incoming tide, staring with all his might in wonder who this might be. And the wave rolled on, still without breaking, until it laid the figure at his feet, very gently. As it did so, it burst at last into shallow foam that surged round his ankles and then ebbed back, leaving both him and her high on the wet rippled sand. He knelt down beside her and looked into her face.

"Are you my wind?" he asked.

She laughed, but answered quite seriously:

"Not quite, although the wind brings me."

"Who are you?" Then there came to him the memory of a tale he had read in a book the old priest had lent him, and he added, "Dione?"

She laughed again.

"So the Greeks called me. And other names they had for me, too. But names are nothing, little fisher-boy. To know me is enough."

"Do *I* know you?" he asked, and she nodded.

Then she told him how, as the years passed over him, he might forget her, and that lest he should do so she had come to warn and safeguard him. There was a remedy, it seemed, against so dreadful a happening.

"Puck's magic is the talisman," she said, "for those who care to buy."

And so it came about that first a mortal heard of the market on Twelve O'clock Knob.

Tony had listened in breathless interest, padding along at Mr. Hockley's side.

" And did he go and buy ?" he asked, but here the Mushroom Man had become a little vague.

" They do say he did," he returned, adding, " 'Twas fern seed was his money, surelye." But what exactly he bought or how the buying was effected he either could not or would not tell. " Midsummer Eve be Puck's market-day," he asserted, " and 'tis from Verdley Wood the fern seed he be brought. And twelve o'clock be the hour or thereabouts. Leastways, I've heard my father say."

Tony had brooded over this lore for days, and then, with infinite ingenuity, engineered an excursion to Verdley Wood botanising with his father. There were strange mosses there, he suggested, as, indeed, was true. Accordingly they had ridden as far as possible by road, stabled Brownie and his father's mare at a wayside farm, and then struck across country. It was whilst his father lazed and smoked after their midday meal of sandwiches and fruit that Tony effected the real object of his visit. He had the greatest difficulty in finding ferns and was almost in despair, when at last he tumbled upon a little nest of them at the end of a kind of fosse. Nor was it the easiest thing in the world to gather the seed, but he shook it down upon a piece of paper, slid it into an envelope and licking it up put it thankfully into his pocket. Then he raced back to his father, whom, fast asleep by this time, he found lying flat on his back beneath a chestnut sapling, with an enormous caterpillar reared on its tail in the very centre of his

shirt front. In the excitement of being rescued from a crawler (whose whole genus he loathed), Mr. Tremayne forgot to ask the reason of so long an absence, and since a specimen of quite rare moss had been found, both returned home completely content and happy.

So here was Tony at 11.15 p.m. on Midsummer Eve, trudging along alone through the shadows and stillness of Vinings Wood, with his precious envelope of fern seed in one knicker-pocket, an acorn cup in the other, and not a little excitement in his soul.

Now, I don't suppose for a moment any of you children who read have been in a great wood at that hour on Midsummer Eve or indeed any other eve, so that without a little help you will never be able to imagine what it is like. To begin with, all the trees seem more alive and more friendly than they do in the sunshine, and they stretch their big arms out and down to you, almost as if they wished to stop you as you pass and hold you there, and talk and play with you. And when, just now, I spoke of the " stillness " I did not mean at all that there were no sounds to hear. On the contrary, not only the wood, but, as it seemed, the whole world was so still that Tony heard more

sounds than he had ever heard before—very quiet, mysterious sounds, such as you don't expect to hear. For instance, a squirrel scampered along the ground in front of him, and the scuffling scratch of his little claws as he ran up the trunk of a big oak-tree was exactly like the patter of Curly, the cocker-spaniel's feet on the red-tiled hall at home. Whereas, in the daytime, as everybody knows, a squirrel climbs a tree quite noiselessly. A tiny twig, disturbed by a half-awakened wood-pigeon, fell on the sandy path just in front of Tony's nose with so loud a plop that he nearly cried out. In the daytime, numbers of quite big twigs are broken and fall, without your hearing them at all. Later, a stoat emerged suddenly from the shadows on the left, and, unconscious of Tony (who at that particular moment was standing quite still), walked across the moonlit path into the shadows again; but Tony heard him rustling over the leaves into the distance, and it was quite a long time before the sound of his progress died away. In the daytime, stoats or rabbits, or any small animals, shoot into sight and out of it without your hearing anything at all. All the time, too, there was so much stir amid the leaves and branches overhead, that Tony decided the Dryads must be a very restless race; or, perhaps, they belonged most to the night-time, he reflected, remembering that he had never heard them moving about so energetically by day. He could even hear the murmur of their conversation, but though he stopped many times straining his ears, he could never distinguish the actual words. He caught a glimpse of one of them, however, in the fork of the great oak-tree, that overshadows the gate at the far end of Vinings Wood. He was a little uncertain whether *all* Dryads were ladies, but certainly this one was. He saw her shoulders gleaming white in the moonlight against the grey

lichened trunk, and her beautiful hair hung down ever so far and wafted to and fro in the soft breeze. He fancied he heard her singing too, and that reminded him of Dryope, so that he fell to wondering whether by night she was allowed to resume her mortal shape, and he looked round, half expecting to see a tiny child playing in the tree's shadow; for Tony had been brought up familiar with many of the old classical myths. He had known, therefore, all about the fisher-boy's Dione, and he was specially fond of the tale of Princess Dryope. (I wonder if you children remember it too. How she plucked the lotus blossom for her little son, and how blood trickled from its broken stem. And whilst she stood staring at it in wonder, a voice cried out that she had slain Lotus, the wood nymph, who, fleeing from Priapus, god of the shade, had changed herself into a flower to escape him. Terrified, Dryope turned to fly, but alas ! she could not move. Swiftly tree-bark grew around her, upward and upward. Her arms changed into twisted

branches. Her hands were filled with leaves. But before the bark closed over her face, she besought that her child might play often beneath her branches. Do you remember? And how when the winds rustled the leaves of the trees, the ancients used to say that Dryope was lulling her child?) Tony thought of all this, but there seemed to be no one beneath the tree's shade except himself and a quite unfrightened rabbit, who sat like a little hunchy mole-hill staring at him not ten yards from his feet. Then a great owl flew out from the very fork where the Dryad had been perched, and Tony was so startled by the hooting and the sudden whir of wings, that he climbed the gate without another glance and ran on as quickly as his legs would carry him.

Now when you pass this particular gate of Vinings Wood you are on the cart-track of Boggarty Farm, and have climbed already to very high ground. On your right the hill, quite thickly clothed with trees and brushwood, falls rapidly to a steep valley that runs backwards towards Bexley. In front, however, this valley is cut short, and round the head of it along the crest the road runs to Grevatt's and to the Heath itself. Boggarty Farm is on the left, just where the road curves; but I am not going to say much about that because Boggarty Farm has a story all to itself. It stands there, though, very lonely and grey and quiet, with its yard in front of it, and its shed-wall fronting the road—for all the world as though to warn off any inquirers into the old house's privacy.

Tony skirted it and then branched off to the right, past an old forsaken barn, where a shaggy, grey donkey leaned like a stone statue, asleep apparently, against a crumbled scratching-post. To his left now there was a turf wall all along the side of Lane End Field, and at the lane's end itself a five-barred

gate. He swung it open, jumping a little at the squeal of its hinge, and passed through, latching it behind him. Then for a moment he stood quite still and, following the suggestion of old Hockley, said aloud and rather slowly the first stanza of "Puck's Market":

"Up amongst the heather,
When the moon is high,
Lamplight in the valley,
Starlight in the sky,
Swinging on the bracken
That's bowing to the breeze,
In and out the twinkling stems
Go the Pharisees."

Now, I don't for a moment promise that any of you children living in Tony's part of Sussex and taking upon yourselves to try his experiment will achieve the same result. It may be you will, it may be not. I have known Tony so long and heard so many of his strange "happenings" that I have grown to be surprised at none of them. But whether they happen as easily to others or largely because Tony is Tony is another question.

At any rate, there he stood beyond Lane End Gate, and he said his charm slowly and solemnly and faithfully, and immediately things began to happen.

First of all, there was no doubt about the bracken-stems. They were twinkling sure enough, though not at all in the way Tony expected, for they were hung with thousands of glow-worm lanterns which, lightening and darkening with every movement, swung to and fro in the breeze.

Then the gate behind him was opened again and slammed back noisily over its latch.

Someone touched him on the shoulder.

" Here we be, Mas' Tony." It was the Mushroom Man. " And don't the fairy sparks a-shimper, surelye? I caught a glimpse of you while you come aside the farm there. I was een a'most the top o' the wood by then, but too far from ye to shout."

" But why did *you* come, Mr. Hockley?"

The Mushroom Man pulled something from his pocket and held it out in the palm of his hand. It was an acorn cup.

" It'll no be the first time I've bought Puck's Magic," he said.

" But what do *you* use it for?" Tony questioned.

Mr. Hockley nodded knowingly.

" Mayhap you've heard 'em speak of me as a wise 'un over at the village," he said, and it was Tony's turn to nod.

" It's noan but seeing it be the sun makes the shadows, leastways when it ain't the moon. One or t'other it be, surelye, a-shining behind what casts 'em. 'Twas the liddle Pharisees taught me that. Seeing's believing, I do reckon, Mas' Tony. There's some folks don't hold there be fairies whatsoever. But them that gathers fern seed, they know better'n that."

Tony pondered this for some minutes in silence.

" I'd always known they were true," he said, at last. " It wasn't just to make sure that *I* came."

" What for, then?"

Tony leaned back against the gate-post and stared thoughtfully beyond Mr. Hockley and the bracken and the heather and even the fairy lights.

"Well, you see," he said, "Dione wasn't just Dione. She meant quite a lot more than that. She meant everything that was beautiful then, and I expect, even now, to have her always would make you never forget things are nice when they don't *seem* nice . . . nice underneath I mean, same as you say the sun's behind the things that throw the shadows. The fairies don't ever forget. I expect that is why they are always laughing and happy and kind. I expect it was a sort of fairy sight Dione meant the fisher-boy to buy, so's he could always go on seeing her and loving her. And I want to buy that too."

The Mushroom Man took out his big red handkerchief and blew his nose slowly and loudly. It was a custom of his when doubtful what to say.

" There's a liddle Pharisee behind yon mole-hump, a-waiting to take us," he remarked, when he had thrust it back into his pocket; and as Tony looked in the direction of his pointing finger the " liddle " Pharisee came towards them.

He was a tiny fellow, not much more than twelve inches high, very like the pixies Tony had seen two years before Like them he was clothed in a kind of jerkin and hose, but instead of their sober brown, his was green as the grass of the watermead, and his cap was bright red with a white feather set jauntily at one side.

He doffed it as he came to a halt in front of them, and made a low bow.

Tony, too, bowed gravely, and Mr. Hockley solemnly removed his billycock, and pulled at the topmost point of his circle of white hair. Nobody spoke, however, and the fairy, wheeling round, set off swiftly through the twinkling bracken-stems. It was not until next day it occurred to Tony that,

as they threaded their way after him, either the bracken had grown very tall or else he and Mr. Hockley, like Alice after the magic cake, had dwindled to one-quarter of their ordinary size. It seemed at the time perfectly natural to be walking beneath a roof of fern-fronds and bumping occasionally into bracken-stems as thick as bamboo canes. As for the glow-worm lanterns, if they hung above their heads, well, after all, that is just where you expect a lantern to be, isn't it?

Still in silence, they made their way across the broad sweep of heath, and it was only when another fairy stepped from the thick side-growth and stood in their path that their first guide turned and spoke.

"It's Pease Blossom," he said, "for the Mushroom Man."

He laid his hand on Tony's shoulder, adding, "Wait!"

Tony watched Mr. Hockley go on his way until both he and Pease Blossom were out of sight. Then, a little uneasy and perhaps a little lonely, he wriggled from beneath the restraining touch.

"I'm going too!" he cried, but the fairy held him fast.

"You must go alone if you'd buy at Puck's Market," he said sternly.

Tony ceased struggling.

"All right!" he said, shaking himself a little petulantly.

"Don't hold me, please, Mr.——"

"Mustard Seed," the fairy finished for him and let go as he spoke. "Sit down and rest a bit."

Tony, tired by his long climb, obeyed rather thankfully, and Mustard Seed swarmed up one of the bracken-stems,

and began to swing himself to and fro. Hardly, however, had he swung a dozen times before he was down again. He stood in front of Tony with his head bent and one finger raised. "Listen! Listen!" he whispered.

From somewhere, not very far distant, came the sound of music—a melody, very dainty, very happy, very enticing.

"They are beginning to dance," Mustard Seed said. "Come along."

They set off again along the path, which threaded in and out, in and out, amongst the bracken growth; and always, as they went, the music grew louder and louder.

At last they broke out into the open, and Tony saw at once exactly where they were, and where the music came from. They stood almost at the edge of the heath. Just in front was the little circular clearing known as Twelve O'clock Knob, and, immediately beyond, the hill fell very steeply to the few cottages gathered at its foot. On a great stone, reared in the very centre of the Knob, stood Robin Goodfellow. As the moon was exactly behind him, however, Tony saw him only as a sharply cut black silhouette against the big yellow circle of

it; but even so, and although Tony had never consciously imagined him, there was no possibility of mistake. The quaint elvish figure could have been no one else. He was quite motionless, except for his right arm, which with a little baton beat time for the music, and his head was thrown back as though he were looking at the stars. From somewhere high above, too, the music came, so perhaps it was from the stars he summoned it. There was a phrase running in Tony's head that seemed to explain somewhat. It was about the " morning stars singing together," but he could not remember it quite. And then there was something else he had once heard that spoke of them " singing as they shine." Long ago, too, his old Irish nurse had told him that fairy music always came from the sky. Why, this was the reason, then. The stars made it, and Puck's magic charmed it down to earth in order that fairies (and mortals, too, if they had ears for it) might enjoy it. All around Puck's stone were little shadowy, dancing figures, but Tony barely noticed them. He was watching, rather, Puck's arm swinging gently backwards and forwards; and, as he watched, the music stole down to him and all round until the gladness of it almost hurt.

Then with an effort he roused himself.

" Puck !" he cried, with a funny little unexpected break in his voice. " Puck ! Oh, Puck ! See, I've come."

As he strode forward on to the Knob itself, everything changed. The music ceased. Flitting figures brushed against him and passed. Puck and his stone vanished like a falling star, and heather and grass were gone from beneath his feet as was the twinkling night-sky overhead. Instead, with sunshine everywhere, his feet clattered a little upon cobble-

stones, and he fronted an awning-covered market stall, breast-high with mint-rock rolls, and slabs of stick-jaw, and long, black liquorice laces. Behind it, a little old man peered over at him through huge horn spectacles, whose glasses rays from the setting sun caught now and then and lit up like windows on a distant hill.

"Wares to sell! Wares to sell!" he called in a quavering old sing-song. "Now then, little gentleman, what can I do for you? Mint rock, is it? Or candy?"

Tony blinked his eyes very rapidly. He had seen things of this kind happen before, and sometimes, if you blinked hard enough, they un-happened and you were reassured. Then he shut them entirely for quite half a minute. But when he looked again, there were the stall and the lollipops and the old

man just the same, so that they had obviously come to stay and must be dealt with accordingly.

"No sweets, thank you," he said politely. "It's magic I've come to buy."

The old man leaned right over and peered at him more intently.

"Name?" he demanded.

"Tony o' Dreams," returned Tony, very brisk and prompt.

"Age?"

"Ten."

"Occupation?"

Tony hesitated.

"I've got so many," he said, "I don't know which I do most. But I know I'm *growing all* the time. Would that do?"

"Currency?"

Tony stared.

"What are you offering to pay in?" the salesman explained.

"Oh," said the boy, "fern seed"—he thrust his hands in his pockets—"an acorn cup full, good measure." He held out both seed-envelope and acorn as he spoke. "You can measure for yourself, if you like."

But the old man was entering all the details in a ledger, and he closed the fat book with a bang before he stretched out his hand for the proffered payment.

Then very carefully he measured out the little brown specks, tipping them into a tiny glass goblet which he held up to the light.

"And so you really want my magic?" he said.

" Puck's Magic," Tony corrected, and sitting down upon a high stool in front of the counter he proceeded to explain.

He told all the tale of Dione and the fisher-boy, and his own ideas upon its meaning.

" So I think it's fairy sight I want to buy," he finished.

But the old man shook his head.

" Not even Puck can sell you quite that," he said.

Tony's face fell.

" Nor," added the other, " is that exactly what you need."

" What then ?"

" Ah !" The old man came round the stall and laid a knobbly, wrinkled hand on the boy's head.

" It used to be said that 'twas fern seed might make a mortal man invisible, but 'tis more like there's things invisible fern seed can make a man to see."

" Why ?" demanded Tony.

" Well . . ." said the old man, " I don't know that I can exactly tell, nor yet, for that matter, that you'd be the wiser even if I could. Fern seed to many folks is fern seed and no more; but magic—why, it's magic, when you believe in it. And so the fairies are where you look for them; and that's not far for those that care to gather fern seed for the market on Twelve O'clock Knob."

Tony found this a little bewildering, and the stallman nodded kindly.

" It's all right, Tony," said he, " and of small account to understand. You go on always looking for them, always expecting. That's what Dione meant, or thereabouts."

He came behind the boy and clasped his head with his big hands, laying his fingers over his eyes and smoothing on the lids something soft and cool and fragrant.

Tony sniffed luxuriously.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"Child"—the old voice was very tender—"oh, child, it's the gift of the Good Folk ye're buying. Far away north there's many that will tell you of it. The Fairies' Ointment they call it there, but here Puck's Magic is the name of it, and a fair name too. For 'tis a blessing you have bought, and little it matters what you or any call it. 'Twill be enough for you to have it."

Tony rose to his feet. Then he turned and looked long and thoughtfully into the old man's face.

"Yes," he said, at last. "Of course, I know you now. It *is* Puck, isn't it? You see, I knew you at once when I saw you beating time against the moon. Then . . . behind your stall, I *didn't* know. I thought you were just an ordinary market-man like Mr. Hobbs at Petworth. But I see now. It's only your clothes and the outside of you I was looking at before. Underneath you're just as fairy as any fairy well could be. I see that."

He wagged his head sagely and contentedly, and once more Robin Goodfellow laid hands on his shoulder—two hands this time. "You'll see fairy under most things now, my Tony, and, what is wiser still, the truth beneath your dreams."

"Shall I?" Tony answered, and added, though he scarcely understood, "I'm so glad."

Then with a sudden pressure of his fingers Robin swung the boy round, and Tony found himself once more in the moonlight

on Twelve O'clock Knob. But now he faced homewards and the long dim sweep of the downs. Somewhere very faint and far away the fairy music sounded, but dancing fairies, Puck, and even Puck's stone itself, had disappeared. Nor was there sight or sound of Mustard Seed, and Tony felt himself suddenly very much alone. After a while, however, as his eyes grew accustomed again to the darkness and the shadows, away in front of him and a little to the right where its view southward was quite uninterrupted he caught sight of a figure standing, and by its billycock recognised Mr. Hockley.

"Mr. Hockley! Hi! Ahoy!" he shouted.

The Mushroom Man turned, beckoning, and Tony ran to him, plunging and ploughing through the thick heather as he went.

"Did you find him?" he cried at Mr. Hockley's side. "*I* did and I bought it, too. Puck's Magic. I've got it. Puck says so. They call it the Fairies' Ointment in some parts. Did *you* get it?" His sentences came out in little gasps, for

running on heathery ground is hard work and he was out of breath.

Mr. Hockley looked about him a little uneasily. "Mayhap I've got it somewhat," he answered, "or maybe not. Best not to speak of 'em. But hearken yonder! Do you hear?"

"Ding dong! Ding dong! Ding dong!"

Right across the down the chimes came, and then the hour struck.

"One . . . two . . . three . . . four. . . ."

Tony went on counting, and then laughed in sudden understanding.

"'Twelve o'clock is sounding in Littlehampton Town,
There's cow-tails still to tangle and hen-roosts still to rob. . . .'

Oh, and I never asked him about that; I *did* mean to."

The Mushroom Man grunted.

"And lucky for you you didn't!" said he. "The liddle gentleman don't like it. Was one as I knew asked him long ago and he flung his fern seed back on him in a passion, and everywhere the fern seed touched him he come out in dunnamany bunches, and a rash over him like as he'd the measles. And never no magic there was for *him*. 'Taint the Pharisees I got on Twelve O'clock Knob,' says he, 'but the rheumatics more like.' And surelye he was noanbut kiddle the rest of his life. But come along, Mas' Tony, the downs they be getting haitchy, and 'tis time we were home, I do reckon."

Tony hitched his fingers in the crook of Mr. Hockley's velveteen arm, and plodded along at his side. After all, he was not used to these late hours, and was beginning to feel very tired and sleepy. Indeed, he was too sleepy to remember his manners, so that it was Mr. Hockley who opened the gate of Lane End Field; and by the time they passed Boggarty Farm, Tony was clutching his friendly arm more tightly still

in order to walk with his eyes shut. At the gate of Vinings Wood, however, he opened them.

" There's a dryad in the oak-tree," he whispered drowsily; " I think it's Dryope."

Mr. Hockley stopped suddenly, and, big boy as Tony was, swung him on to his back.

The boy slid his hands beneath the old man's white beard, and locked the fingers of them as firmly as he could. Never in all his life had he felt so sleepy.

" I'm so sorry," he murmured regretfully. " But I don't . . . think . . . I . . . *can* . . . keep a . . . wake. It *is* . . . a . . . pity."

It *was* a pity ! He wanted so much to see the " chimney-shadows streaking down the sandy street " as they passed through, and he was anxious, too, that Mr. Hockley should see how easily he climbed the porch-post and scrambled up the little gabled roof. As it was, Mr. Hockley must have found a door or a window open and carried him upstairs. He even changed his jacket for him, for when Tony woke in the morning, although he was still half-dressed, as he had been when he dozed the night before, he had his pyjama jacket on top, instead of the tweed coat he had worn for his moonlight excursion. This was rather puzzling and set him wondering for a moment whether he had dreamed it all, but then he caught sight of his hair-brush in its proper tray upon the dressing-table, and he remembered how it had wakened him and fallen to the floor.

" I picked it up just before I got out of the window," he said thoughtfully.

Jumping out of bed, he ran across the carpet and looked out over the sill.

There were streaky marks where he had slid down the roof, so it was quite true; and even if Mr. Hockley stared at him and shook his head when questioned . . . well, after all, it was not the first time he had refused to talk aloud about such things. Probably he *thought* the more.

MARIA, WHO MADE FACES AND A DEPLORABLE MARRIAGE

By HILAIRE BELLOC

MARIA loved to pull a face:
And no such commonplace grimace
As you or I or anyone

Might make at grandmamma for fun,
But one where nose and mouth and all
Were screwed into a kind of ball,

The which—as you may well expect—
Produced a horrible effect
On those it was directed at.
One morning

she was struck like that!
Her features took their final mould
In shapes that made your blood run cold
And wholly lost their former charm.
Mamma, in agonised alarm,

Consulted a renowned Masseuse
—An old and valued friend of hers—

Who rubbed the wretched child for days
In five-and-twenty different ways
And after that began again.
But all in vain—but all in vain!

The years advance: Maria grows
Into a blooming English Rose—
With every talent, every grace
(Save in this trifle of the face).

She sang,

recited, laughed and played
At all that an accomplished maid
Should play with skill to be of note—
Golf, the piano and

the goat;

She talked in French till all was blue
And knew a little German too.

She told the tales that soldiers tell,
She also danced extremely well,
Her wit was pointed, loud and raw,
She shone at laying down the law,
She drank liqueurs instead of tea,
Her verse was admirably free
And quoted in the latest books—

But people couldn't stand her looks.
Her parents had with thoughtful care

Proclaimed her genius everywhere,
Nor quite concealed a wealth which sounds

Enormous—thirty million pounds—
And further whispered it that she
Could deal with it exclusively.

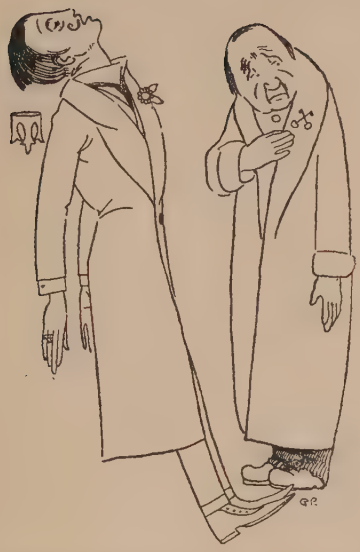
They did not hide her chief defect,
But what with birth and intellect
And breeding and such ample means,
And still in her delightful 'teens,
A girl like our Maria (they thought)
Should make the kind of match she ought.
Those who had seen her here at home
Might hesitate; but Paris, Rome . . .
The foreigners should take the bait.
And so they did. At any rate
The greatest men of every land
Arrived in shoals to seek her hand—

Grand Dukes,

Commanders of the Fleece,

Mysterious millionaires from Greece,
And exiled Kings in large amounts,
Ambassadors and Papal Counts
And Rastaquoairs from Buenos Aires
And famous Foreign Secretaries,

They came along in turns to call.



But *all*, without exception, *all*,
Though with determination set,
Yet when they actually *met*

Would start convulsively as though
They had received a sudden blow,

And, mumbling a discreet good-day,
Would shuffle, turn and slink away.
The upshot of it was Maria

Was married to a neighbouring squire
Who, being blind, could never guess
His wife's appalling ugliness.
The man was independent, dull,
Offensive, poor and masterful.
It was a very dreadful thing!
Now let us turn to Sarah Byng.*

* *But Sarah Byng does not live at Number One Joy Street.*

MISS JEMIMA

By WALTER DE LA MARE

IT was a hot, still evening; the trees stood motionless; and not a bird was singing under the sky when the little old lady and the child appeared together over the crest of the hill. They paused side by side on the long, green, mounded ridge, behind which the sun was now descending. And spread out flat beneath them were the fields and farms and the wandering stream of the wide countryside. It was quite flat, and a faint thin mist was over it all, stretching out as if to the rim of the world. The little old lady and the child presently ventured a few further paces down the hillside, then again came to a standstill, and gazed once more, from under the umbrella that shaded them against the hot sun, on the scene spread out beneath them.

"Is *that* the house, Grannie," said the child, "that one near the meadow with the horses in it, and the trees? And is that *queer* little grey building right in the middle of that green square field the church?"

The old lady pressed her lips together, and continued to gaze through her thick glasses at the great solitary country scene. Then she drew her umbrella down with a click, placed it on the turf beside her, and sat down on it.

"I don't suppose the grass *is* damp, my dear, after this long hot day; but you never know," she said.

"It's perfectly dry, Grannie dear, and *very* beautiful," said the child, as if she could hardly spare the breath for the words. Then she too sat down. She had rather long fair

hair, and a straight small nose under her round hat with its wreath of buttercups. Her name was Susan.

"And *is* that the house, Grannie?" she whispered once more. "And *is* that the church where you did really and truly see it?"

The old lady never turned her eyes, but continued to overlook the scene as if she had not heard the small voice questioning; as if she were alone with her thoughts. And at that moment, one after another, a troop of gentle-stepping, half-wild horses appeared on a path round the bluff of the hill. Shyly eyeing the two strange human figures there in their haunts, one and another of them lifted a narrow lovely head to snort; and a slim young bay, his mane like rough silk in the light, paused to whinny. Then one by one they trotted along the path, and presently were gone. Susan watched them out of sight, then sighed.

"This is a lovely place to be in, Grannie," she said, and sighed again. "I wish I had been here too when I was little. Please do tell me again about the—*you* know."

Her voice trailed off faintly in the still golden air up there on the hill, as if she were now a little timid of repeating the question. She drew in closer beside her grannie, and pushing her small fingers between those of the bent-up, black-gloved hand in the old lady's lap, she stooped forward after another little pause, looked up into the still grey face with its spectacles, and said very softly, "*How* many years ago did you say?"

There was a mild far-away expression in the slate-grey eyes into which Susan was looking, as if memory were retracing one by one the years that had gone. Never had Susan sat like this, upon a green hill, above so immense a world, or in so hushed an evening quiet. Her busy eyes turned once more

"How many years ago did you say?"

to look first in the direction in which the trotting comely horses had vanished, then down again to the farmhouse with its barns and byres and orchard. They then rested once more on the grey stone church—which from this height looked almost as small as a dolls' church—in the midst of its green field.

"*How* many years ago, Grannie ?" repeated Susan.

"More than I scarcely dare think of," said the old woman at last, gently pressing her fingers. "Seventy-five, my dear."

"Seventy-five!" breathed Susan. "But that's not so very many, Grannie dear," she added quickly, pushing her head against her grannie's black-caped shoulder. "And now, before it is too late, please will you tell me the story. You see, Grannie, soon we shall have to be going back to the cab, or the man will suppose we are not coming back at all. *Please*."

"But you know most of it already."

"Only in pieces, Grannie; and besides, to think that here we are—here, in the very place !"

"Well," began the old voice at last, "I will tell it you all again, if you persist, my dear; but it's a little *more* than seventy-five years ago, for—though you would not believe it of such an old person—I was born in May. My mother, your great-grandmother, was young then, and in very delicate health after my father's death. Her doctor had said she must go on a long sea voyage. And since she was not able to take me with her, I was sent to that little farm-house down there—Green's Farm, as it was called—to spend the months of her absence with my Uncle James and his housekeeper, who was called Miss Jemima."

"Miss Jemima!" cried the little girl, stooping over suddenly with a burst of laughter. "It *is* a queer name, you know, Grannie."

" It is," said the old lady. " And it belonged to one to whom it was my duty to show affection, but who never much cared for the little girl she had in her charge. And when people don't care for you, it is sometimes a little difficult, Susan, to care for them. At least *I* found it so. I don't mean that Miss Jemima was unkind to me, only that when she was kind, she seemed to be kind on purpose. And when I had a slice of plum cake, her face always seemed to tell me it was *plum* cake, and that I deserved only plain. My Uncle James knew that his housekeeper did not think me a pleasant little girl. I was a shrimp in size, with straight black hair which she made me tie in a pigtail with a piece of velvet ribbon. I had little dark eyes and very skimpy legs. And though he himself was very fond of me, he showed his affection only when we were alone together, and not when she was present. He was ill, too, then, though I did not know *how* ill. And he lay all day in a long chair with a check rug over his legs, and Miss Jemima had charge not only of me, but of the farm."

" *All* the milking, and the ploughing, and the chickens, and the pigs, Grannie?" asked Susan.

The old lady shut her eyes an instant, pressed her lips together and said, " All."

" The consequence was," she went on, " I was rather a solitary child. Whenever I could, I used to hide myself away in some corner of the house—and a beautiful house it is. It's a pity, my dear, I am so old and you so young and this hill so steep. Otherwise we could go down and—well, never mind. That row of small lattice windows which you can see belong to a narrow corridor; and the rooms out of it, rambling one into the other, were walled in just as the builders fancied,

when they made the house three hundred years or more ago. And that was in the reign of Edward VI."

"Like the Bluecoat boys," said Susan, "though I can't say I like the yellow stockings, Grannie, not that *mustard* yellow, you know."

"Like the Bluecoat boys," repeated her grandmother. "Well, the house was simply a nest of hiding-places; and I was small—smaller even than you. I would sit with my book; or watch out of a window, *lean* out too sometimes—as if to see my mother in India. And whenever the weather was fine, and sometimes when it was not, I would creep out of the house and run away down that shaggy lane to the little wood you see there. There is a brook in it (though you can't see that) which brawls with a hundred tongues. And sometimes I would climb up this very hill. And sometimes I would creep across the field to that little church.

"It was there I most easily forgot myself and my small scrapes and troubles—with the leaves and the birds, and the blue sky and the clouds overhead, or watching a snail, or picking kingcups and cowslips, or staring into the stream at the fish. You see I was rather a doleful little creature: first because I was alone; next because my Uncle James was ill and so could not be happy; and last because I was made to feel more homesick than ever, by the cold glances and cold tongue of Miss Jemima."

"Miss Jemima!" echoed Susan, burying her face in her amusement an instant in her hands.

"Miss Jemima," repeated the old voice solemnly. "But I was not only dismal and doleful. Far worse: I made little attempt to be anything else, and began to be fretful too. There

was no company of my own age, for, as you see, the village is a mile or two off—over there where the sun is lighting the trees up. And I was not allowed to play with the village children. The only company I had was a fat little boy of two, belonging to one of the farm-hands. And he was so backward a baby, that even at that age he could scarcely say as many words."

"I began to talk at one," said Susan.

"Yes, my dear," said her grannie, "and you are likely, it seems, to go on talking the clock round."

"Grannie, dear," said Susan, "I simply *love* this story—until—*you* know."

"Now of all the places where I was supposed not to go to," continued the old lady, "that churchyard was the very one. My aunt, as I say, thought me a fantastic silly-notioned little girl, and she didn't approve of picking flowers that grow among tombstones. Indeed, I am not now quite sure myself if such flowers belong to the living at all. Still, once or twice in the summer the old sexton—Mr. Fletcher he was called, and a very grumpy old man he was—used to come with his scythe and mow the lush grasses down. And you could scarcely breathe for the sweet smell of them. It seemed a waste to see them lying in swaths, butterflies hovering above them, fading in the sun. There never were such buttercups and dandelion-clocks and meadow-sweet as grew beneath those old grey walls. I was happy there; and coming and going, I would say a prayer for my mother. But you will please understand, Susan, that I was being disobedient; that I had no business to be there at all—when I first came to know there was somebody else in the churchyard."

"Ah! somebody else," sighed Susan, sitting straight up, her eyes far away.

"It was one evening, rather like this one, but with a mackerel sky. The day before I had been stood in the corner for wearing an orange ribbon in my hair; and then sent to bed for talking to the grandfather's clock. I did it on purpose. And now—*this* evening, I was being scolded because I would not eat blackberry jam with my bread for tea. I was told it was because I had been spoilt, and was a little town child who did not know that God had made the wild fruits for human use, and who thought that the only things fit to eat grew in gardens.

"Really and truly I disliked the blackberry jam because of the pips, and I had a hollow tooth. But I told my aunt that my mother didn't like blackberry jam either, which made her still more angry.

"'Do you really think, James,' she said to my uncle, 'we should allow the child to grow up a dainty little minx like that? Now, see here, Miss, you will just stay there until you have eaten up the whole of that slice on your plate.'

"'Well, then, Miss Jemima,' I said pertly, 'I shall stay here till I am eighty.'

"'Hold your tongue,' she bawled at me, with eyes blazing.

"'I can't bear the horrid——' I began again, and at that she gave me such a slap on my cheek that I overbalanced, and fell out of my chair. She lifted me up from the floor with a shake, set me in my chair again, and pushed it against the table till the edge was cutting into my legs. 'And now,' she said, 'sit there till you are eighty!'

"A look I had never seen before came into my uncle's

face; his hands were trembling. Without another word to me, Miss Jemima helped him rise from his chair, and I was left alone.

" Never before had I been beaten like that. And I was almost as much frightened as I was hurt. I listened to the tall clock ticking, ' Wick-ed child, stub-born child,' and my tears splashed slowly down on the ugly slice of bread-and-jam on my plate. Then all of a sudden I clenched and shook my ridiculous little fist at the door by which she had gone out, wriggled back my chair, jumped out of it, rushed out of the house, and never stopped to breathe or to look back, until I found myself sitting huddled up under the biggest tomb in the churchyard; crying there, if not my heart out, at least a good deal of my sour little temper."

" Poor Grannie !" said Susan, squeezing her hand.

" There was not much ' poor ' about that," was the reply. " A pretty sight I must have looked, with my smeared face, green-stained frock and hair dangling. At last my silly sobbing ceased. The sky was flaming with the sunset. It was in June, and the air very mild and sweet. But instead of being penitent and realising what a bad and foolish child I was, I began to be coldly rebellious. I stared at the rosy clouds and vowed to myself I'd give Miss Jemima a fright. I'd rather die than go back to the house that night. And when the thought of my mother came into my mind, I shut it out, saying to myself that she could not have cared how much I loved her, to leave me like this. And yet only a fortnight before a long letter had come to me from India !

" Well, there I sat. A snail came out of his day's hiding-place; moths began to appear; the afternoon's butterflies all gone to rest. Far away I heard a hooting—and then a step.

Cautiously peering up above my tombstone, I saw Maggie, one of the girls that helped on the farm. Her face was burning hot, and she was staring about her round the corner of the little church tower with her saucer blue eyes. She called to me, and at that my mouth opened and I made a shrill yelping squeal. She screeched too; her steel-tipped boot slipped on the flagstones; in an instant she was gone. And once more I was alone."

"Ah, but you weren't *really* alone, Grannie," whispered Susan, "were you?"

"That was just what I was going to tell you, my dear. Immediately in front of my face stood some tall dandelion stalks, with their beautiful clocks, grey in the late evening light. And there were a few other gently nodding flowers. As I stared across them, on the other side of the flat gravestone a face appeared. I mean it didn't rise up. It simply came into the air. A very small face, more oval than round, its gold-coloured hair over its wild greenish eyes falling on either side its head in a curious zigzag way—like this, I mean." The old lady took the hem of her skirt, and three or four times folded it together, then loosened it out.

"You mean, Grannie, as if it had been pleated," said Susan.

"Yes," said her grannie. "I noticed that most particularly. And very lovely it looked in the reddish light. The face was not smiling, and did not appear to see me sitting there, no more than a lion does when he looks out of his cage at the people gathered round to see him fed. And yet I knew *she* knew that I was there. And though I did not think she minded my being there, I felt more frightened than I had ever been in my life. My mouth opened; I was clutching tight the grass

on either side. And I saw nothing else as I stared into that tiny face."

"That was the Fairy, Grannie," said Susan, stooping forward again as if to make her words more impressive. The old lady glanced fixedly at the two blue eyes bent on her from under the brim of the round straw hat.

"At that moment, my dear, I did not know *what* it was. I was far too frightened to think. Time must have been passing, too, very quickly, for as I stared on, it was already beginning to be gloaming between us, and silent. Yes, much more silent even than this. Then, suddenly, behind me a low birdlike voice began to sing from out of the may-bushes, the notes falling like dewdrops in the air. I knew it was a nightingale. And at the very moment the thought came to me—That is a nightingale—the face on the other side of the rough grey stone vanished.

"For a few minutes I sat without moving—not daring to move. And then I ran, straight out of the churchyard by the way I had come, as fast as my legs could carry me. I hardly know what I thought, but as soon as I saw the lights in the upper windows of the farm, I ran even faster. Up under the ilexes, and round through the farmyard to the back door. It was unlatched. I slipped through, quiet as a mouse, into the kitchen, climbed into the chair, and at once devoured every scrap of that horrid bread-and-jam!

"And still, my dear, I don't believe I was really thinking, only dreadfully afraid, and yet with a kind of triumph in my heart that Miss Jemima should never know anything at all about the face in the churchyard. It was all but dark in the kitchen now, but I still sat on in my chair, even at last lifted the

"And then the door opened, and Miss Jemima stood there in the entry with a lighted brass candlestick in her hand."

plate, and insolently licked up with my tongue every jammy crumb that was left.

" And then the door opened, and Miss Jemima stood there in the entry with a lighted brass candlestick in her hand. She looked at me, and I at her. 'Ah, I see you have thought better of it,' she said. ' And high time too. You are to go straight to bed.'

" If you can imagine, Susan, a cake made almost entirely of plums, and every plum a black thought of hatred, I was like that. But I said never a word. I got down from my chair, marched past her down the flagstone passage, and she followed after. When I came to my uncle's door, I lifted my hand towards the handle. ' Straight on, Miss,' said the voice behind me. ' You have made him too ill and too unhappy to wish you good-night.' Straight on I went, got into bed with all my clothes on, even my dew-wet shoes, and stared at the ceiling till I fell asleep."

" You know, Grannie," said Susan, " it was very curious of you not even to undress at all. Why do you think you did that?"

" My dear," said her grannie, " at that moment I had such a hard, hot heart in me, that there was not any room for a why. But you see that little jutting attic window above the trees—it was in the room beyond that and on the other side of the house that I lay. And it's now seventy-five years ago. It may be there was even then a far-away notion in my mind of getting up in the middle of the night and running away. But whether or not, I was awakened by the sun streaming through my lattice window, for my bedroom lay full in the light of the morning.

"I could think of but one thing—my disgrace of the night before, and what I had seen in the churchyard. It was a dream, I thought to myself, shutting my eyes, yet knowing all the time that I did not believe what I was saying. Even when I was told at breakfast that my uncle was no better, I thought little of him, and gobbled down my porridge, with the one wish to be out of the house before I could be forbidden to go out. But the only sign of Miss Jemima was my dirty jam-stained plate of the night before, upon which she had put my hunch of breakfast bread. Yet although I was so anxious to get out, for some reason I chose very carefully what I should wear, and changed the piece of ribbon in my hat from blue to green. A rare minx I was."

"You were, Grannie," said Susan, clasping her knees. "And then you went out to the churchyard again?"

"Yes. But all seemed as usual there; except only that a tiny bunch of coral-coloured berries lay on a flat leaf, on the very tombstone where I had hid. Now though I was a minx, my dear, I was also fairly sharp for my age, and after the first gulp of surprise, as I stood there among the nodding buttercups, the sun already having stolen over the grey roof and shining upon the hot tombstones, I noticed a beady dewdrop resting on the leaf, and the leaf of as fresh a green as lettuce in a salad. Looking at this dewdrop I realised at once that the leaf could not have been there very long. Indeed, in a few minutes the sun had drunk up that one round drop of water, for it was some little time before I ventured to touch the berries.

"Then I knew in my heart I was not alone there, and that that green dish had been put there on purpose, just before I had come. The berries were lovely to look at, too; of a coral colour edging into rose. And I don't think it was because I

had long ago been warned not to taste strange fruit, but because I was uneasy in conscience already, that I did not nibble one then and there.

" It was very quiet in that green place, and on and on I watched, as still as a cat over a mouse's hole, though I myself really and truly was the mouse. And then, all of a sudden, flinging back my green dangling hat-ribbon, I remember, over my shoulder, I said half aloud, in an affected little voice, ' Well, it's very kind of you, I am sure,' stretched my hand across, plucked one of the berries, and put it into my mouth.

" Hardly had its juice tartened my tongue when a strange thing happened. It was as if a grasshopper was actually sitting in my hair, the noise of tiny laughter was so close. Besides this, a kind of heat began to creep into my cheek, and it seemed all the colours around me grew so bright that they dazzled my eyes. I closed them. I must have sat there for a while quite unconscious of time, for when I opened them again, the shadow had gone a pace or two back from the stone, and it was getting towards the middle of the morning.

" But there was still that dazzle in my eyes, and everything I looked at—the flowers and the birds, even the moss and lichen on the old stones, seemed as if they were showing me secrets about themselves that I had not known before. It seemed that I could share the very being of the butterfly that was hovering near; and could almost hear not only what the birds were singing, but what they were saying."

" Just like the fairy-tales, Grannie."

" Yes," said the little old woman, " but the difference is that I was not happy about it. The flush was still in my cheek, and I could hear my heart beating under my frock, and I was

all of an excitement. But I knew in my inmost self that I ought not to feel like that at all; that I had crept into danger through my wicked temper; that those little unknown coral fruits on the tombstone had been put there for a trap. It was a bait, Susan; and I was the silly fish."

"O Grannie, a 'silly fish'!" said Susan. "I can see you *might* feel wicked," she added, with a sage little nod, "but I don't *exacaly* see why."

"That is just when it's most dangerous, my child," said her grandmother, sharply closing her mouth very much indeed like a fish. "But I must get on with my story, or we shall never be home.

"I sat on, keeping my eyes as far as I could fixed on the invisible place in the air where I had seen the face appear, but nothing came, and gradually the scene lost its radiance, and the birds were chirping as usual again, and the buttercups were the same as ever. No, not the same as ever, because, although it was a burning, sunny day, it seemed now that everything was darker and gloomier than usual on so bright a morning, and I skulked away home, feeling not only a little cold, but dejected and ashamed.

"As I went in through the gate between those two stone pillars you can just see by the round green tree down there, I looked up at the windows. And a dreadful pang seized me to see that their curtains were all drawn over the glass. And though I didn't know then what that meant, I knew it meant something sorrowful and tragic. Besides, they seemed like shut eyes, refusing to look at me. And when I went in, Miss Jemima told me that my uncle was dead. She told me, too, that he had asked to see me an hour or two before he died.

'He said, "Where is my little Susan?" And where you have been,' added Miss Jemima, 'is known only to your wicked wilful self.' I stared at her, and seemed to shrink until she appeared to be twice as large as usual. I could not speak, because my tongue would not move. And then I rushed past her and up the stairs into a corner between two cupboards, where I used sometimes to hide, and I don't know what I did or thought there; I simply sat on and on, with my hands clenched in my lap, everything I looked at all blurred, and my lips trying to say a prayer that would not come.

"From that day on I became a more and more wretched and miserable little girl, and, as I think now, a wickeder one. It all came of three things. First, because I hated Miss Jemima, and that is just like leaving a steel knife in vinegar, it so frets and wastes the heart. Next, because of the thought of my poor uncle speaking of me so gently and kindly when he was at death's door; and my remorse that I could never now ask him to forgive me. And last, because I longed to see again that magical face in the churchyard, and yet knew that it was forbidden."

"But, Grannie dear, you know," said Susan, "I never can see why you should have thought that then."

"No," replied the old lady. "But the point was, you see, that I *did* think it, and I knew in my heart that it would lead to no good. Miss Jemima made me go next day into the room where my uncle lay in his coffin. But try as she might to persuade and compel me, she could not make me open my eyes and look at him. For that disobedience she sent me to my bedroom for the rest of the day.

"When all was still, I crept out across the corridor into another room, and looked out over the trees towards the

little church. And I said to myself, as if I were speaking to someone who would hear, 'I am coming to you soon, and nobody, *nobody* here shall ever see me again.'

"Think of it; a little girl not yet nine, angry with the whole world, and hardly giving a thought to the mother who was longing to see her, and—though I didn't know it then—was very soon to be in England again.

"Well, then came the funeral. I was dressed—I can see myself now, as I stood looking into the looking-glass—in a black frock trimmed with crape, with a tucker of white frilling round the neck, and an edging of it at the sleeves; my peaked white face and coal-black eyes.

"It was, as you see, but a very little distance to my poor uncle's last resting-place, and in those days they used a little hand-cart on wheels, which the men pushed in front of us, with its flowers. And Miss Jemima and I followed after it across the field. I listened to the prayers as closely as I could. But at last my attention began to wander, and, kneeling there beside Miss Jemima in the church, my hands pressed close to my eyes, for an instant I glanced out and up between my fingers.

"The great eastern window, though you cannot see it from here, is of centuries-old stained glass, crimson, blue, green. But in one corner, just above the narrow ledge of masonry outside, it had been broken many, many years ago by the falling of a branch of a tree, and had been mended with clear *white* glass. And there, looking steadily in and straight across and down at me, was the face and form of the being I had seen beside the tombstone.

"I cannot tell you, Susan, how beautiful that face looked then. Those rich colours of the saints and martyrs surrounding that

gold hair—living gold—and the face as pale and beautiful—far more beautiful than anything else I had ever seen in my life before. But even then I saw, too, that into the morning church a kind of shadowy darkness had come, and the stone faces on either side the window, with their set stare, looked actually to be alive. I gazed between my fingers, hearing not a single word of what the old clergyman was saying, wondering when anyone else would see what I saw, and knowing that the smiling lips were breathing across at me, 'Come away, come away!'

"My bones were all cramped, and at last I managed to twist my head a little and peep up at Miss Jemima. The broad face beneath her veil had its eyes shut, and the lips were muttering. She had noticed nothing amiss. And when I looked again, the face at the window was vanished.

"It was a burning hot day—so hot that the flowers beside the grave were already withering before Miss Jemima took me home. We reached the stone porch together, and in its cold shadow she paused, staring down on me through her veil. 'You will be staying on here for a while, because I don't know what else to do with you,' she said to me. 'But you will understand that this is my house now. I am telling your mother how bad a child you are making yourself, and perhaps she will ask me to send you away to a school where they know how to deal with stubborn and ungrateful beings like yourself. But she will be sorry, I think, to hear that it was your wickedness that brought that poor kind body to its grave over there. And now, Miss, as the best part of the day is over, you shall have your bread-and-butter and milk in your bedroom, and think over what I have said.'"

"I think, Grannie," cried Susan, bending herself nearly double, "that that Miss Jemima was the most dreadful person I have ever heard of."

"Well, my dear," said her grandmother, "I have lived a good many years, and believe it is wiser to try and explain to oneself people as well as things. Do you suppose she would have been as harsh to me if I hadn't hated her? And now she lies there too, and I never had her forgiveness either."

Susan turned her head away and looked out over the countryside to the north, to where the roving horses had vanished, and where evening was already beginning gradually to settle itself towards night.

"And *did* you think over what Miss Jemima had said, Grannie?" she asked in a low voice.

"The first thing I did was to throw the bread-and-butter out of the window, and while I watched the birds wrangling over it and gobbling it up, I thought of nothing at all. It was cooler in the shade on that side of the house. My head ached after the sorrowful walk to the church and back. I came away from the window, took off my black frock, and sat there on the edge of my bed, I remember, in my petticoat, not knowing what to do next. And then, Susan, I made up my mind that I could not bear to be in Miss Jemima's house for a day longer than I need.

"I was just clever enough to realise that if I wanted to run away I must take care not to be brought back. I grew hot all over at the thought of such a shame, never thinking how weak and silly I was not to be able to endure patiently what could only be a few more days or weeks before another letter came from my mother. Then I tore a leaf from a book that was in

my room—a Prayer-Book—and scrawled a few words to my mother, saying how miserable *and* wicked I had been, and how I longed to see her again. It's a curious thing, Susan, but I was pitying myself while I wrote those words, and thinking how grieved my mother would be when she read them, and how well Miss Jemima would deserve whatever my mother said to her. But I didn't utter a word in the letter about where I was going."

"You didn't really *know* where you were going, Grannie," whispered Susan, edging a little nearer. "Did you? Not *then*, I mean?"

"No, but I had a faint notion whom I was going *to;* for somehow, from old fairy tales I had got to believe that human children could be taken away to quite a different world from this—a country of enchantment. And I remembered having read, too, about two children that had come back from there, and had forgotten their own English."

"I know two poems about it," said Susan. "One about 'True Thomas'—'Thomas the Rhymer,' you know, Grannie, who stayed with the Queen of Fairyland for seven whole years, and another about . . . I do wonder—— But please, *please*, go on."

"Well, I hid my little letter in a cranny in the wainscot, after sewing a piece of cotton to it so that I might pull it out again when I wanted it. The next morning, I got up early, and slipping on my clothes, tiptoed out of the house before breakfast, and made my way to the church. I thought deceitfully that Miss Jemima would be sure to find out that I was gone, and that if for a morning or two she discovered me quietly sitting in the churchyard she would not suppose at another time, perhaps, that I was not safely there again.

Plots, Susan, are tangled things, and are likely to tangle the maker of them too.

" The old man who took care of the church, Mr. Fletcher, to save himself the trouble of carrying the key of the door, used to hide it under a large stone beneath the belfry tower. I had watched him put it there. It was a fresh sparkling day, I remember, with one or two thin silver clouds high in the sky —angels, I used to call them—and I forgot for the moment in the brightness of it all my troubles, as I frisked along past the dewy hedges.

" My first thought was to make quite, quite sure about the Fairy Creature in the churchyard, my next to plan a way of escape. I gathered a bunch of daisies, and having come to the belfry door, I somehow managed to open it with the key which I dragged out from beneath its stone, and crept into the still, empty coolness. I had come to the conclusion, too, Susan, young though I was, that if the Fairy Creature or whatever she might be actually came into the church to me, it might be a proof there was no harm in her company, for I knew in my heart that I was in some mysterious danger.

" There are a few old oak pews in the little church, with heads carved upon them, and one or two have side seats that draw out from the wood into the aisle. On one of these I sat down, so that while I could be intent on my daisy-chain— just to show I had something to do there—I could see out of the corner of my eye the open door by which I had come in. And I hadn't very long to wait.

" In the midst of the faint singing of the wild birds, out of the light that lay beyond the stone church wall I spied her come stealing. My heart almost stopped beating, nor did I

turn my head one inch, so that my eyes soon ached because they were almost asquint with watching. If you can imagine a figure—even now I cannot tell you how tall she was—that seems to be made of the light of rainbows, and yet with every feature in its flaxen-framed face as clearly marked as a cherub's cut in stone; and if you can imagine a voice coming to you, close into your ear, without your being able to say exactly where it is coming *from—that* was what I saw and heard beneath that grey roof down there on that distant morning, seventy-five years ago. The longer I watched her out of the corner of my eye, the more certain I became that she was using every device she knew to attract my attention, even that she was impatient at my stupidity, and yet that she could not or did not, dare to cross the threshold. And so I sat and watched her, fumbling on the while with my limpening daisy-stalks. Many strange minutes must have passed like this.

" At last, however, having fancied I heard a footfall, I was surprised out of myself, and suddenly twisted my head. She too had heard, and was standing stiller than a shadow on snow, gazing in at me. I suppose thoughts reveal themselves in the face more swiftly than one imagines. I was partly afraid, partly longing to approach closer. I wished her to realise that I longed for her company, but that danger was near, for I was well aware whose step it was I had heard. And, as I looked at her, there came a sharpness into her face, a cold inhuman look—not of fear, but almost like hatred—and she was gone. More intent than ever, I stooped over my daisies. And in the hush there was a faint sound as of an intensely distant whistle.

" Then a shadow fell across the porch, and there was Miss Jemima. It's a strange thing, Susan, but Miss Jemima

also did not enter the church. She called to me from where she stood, in almost a honeyed voice: 'Breakfast is ready, Susan.'"

"I can imagine *exacaly* how she said that, Grannie," said the little girl, "because my name's Susan, too."

"Yes, my dear," said the old lady, squeezing her hand. "It was passed on to you from me by your dear mother just because it was mine. And I hope you will always be the Susan I have *now*." From near at hand upon the hill a skylark suddenly took its flight into the evening blue. The old lady listened a moment before going on with her story.

"Well," she began again, "I gathered up my apron and walked towards Miss Jemima down the aisle. Suddenly there came a slight rumbling noise, which I could not understand. Then instantly there followed a crash. And at Miss Jemima's very feet, in the sunlight, I saw lying a piece of stone about the size of a small plum pudding. Miss Jemima gave a faint scream. Her cheek, already pale, went white; and she stared from me to the stone and back again, as I approached her.

"'You were talking in there—in God's church—to someone,' she whispered harshly, stooping towards me. 'To whom?'

"I shook my head, and stood trembling and gazing at the stone.

"'Look into my face, you wicked child,' she whispered. 'Who were you talking to in there?'

"I looked up at last. 'It's empty,' I said.

"'There's a lying look in your eyes!' cried Miss Jemima. 'And you are the child that goes into a sacred place to weave

daisy-chains! Turn your face away from me. Do you hear me, Miss? Miserable little *Sorceress* that you are!'

"The word seemed to flame up in my mind as if it had been written in fire on smoke; and still I stared at the stone. I felt but did not see Miss Jemima steadily turn her head and look around her.

"'A few inches,' she added in a low voice, 'and you would have killed me.'

"'Me!' I cried angrily. 'What has it to do with *me*, Miss Jemima?'

"'Ah!' said she. 'We shall know a little more about that when you have told me what company you find here where your poor uncle might hope to be at rest.'

"It's a dreadful thing to confess, Susan, but up to that moment, though I had again and again cried by myself at memory of him, though tears were always in my heart for him, I hadn't thought of my uncle that morning.

"'And perhaps,' added Miss Jemima, 'bread and water and solitude for a day or two will help to persuade your tongue.'

"I followed her without another word across the field, and in a few minutes was alone once more in my bedroom with a stale crust and a glass of water to keep me company.

"I should think if my angry tears had run into the water that morning, they would have actually made it taste salt. But I cried so that not even a mouse could have heard me. Every other thought was now out of my mind—for I dared not even talk to myself about the stone—but that of getting away from the house for ever. One thing I could not forget, however, and that was the word 'sorceress.' It terrified me far more

than I can tell you. I knew in my young mind that Miss Jemima was treating me wickedly, however naughty I had been, and I knew too, in strange fear, that the stone might not have fallen by accident. I had seen the look on the Fairy's face and . . ." The old lady suddenly broke off her story at this point, and looked about her in alarm. "My dear, we must go at once; the dew is beginning to fall, and the air is already colder."

"Oh, Grannie," said the child, "how I wish we might stay—a little, *little* longer!"

"Well, my dear, so do I. For I am old, and I shall never see this place again. It brings many memories back. Who knows what might have happened if——"

"But, Grannie," interrupted the child hastily, picking up the umbrella from the grass. "Please tell me the rest of the story straight, straight, straight on as we go back." It seemed to Susan, so still was her grandmother's face at that moment, and so absent her eyes—that she could not have heard her. The small aged eyes were once more looking carefully down on the scene below. For an instant they shut as if the old lady had thought so to remember it more completely. And then the two of them began slowly to climb the hill, and the story proceeded.

"No one disturbed me during the long morning," continued the old voice, but in the afternoon the door was unlocked, and Miss Jemima opened it to show in the Reverend Mr. Wilmot, who conducted the service in the church every other Sunday. I won't tell you all he said to me. He was a kind and gentle old man, but he didn't so much as think it possible there was any being or thing in the churchyard but its birds, its tomb-

stones, and now and then a straying animal. He only smiled about all that, nor did he ask me Miss Jemima's question.

" He took my hand in his great bony one and begged me to be a good little girl. And I see his smiling face as he asked it. 'Not only for your mother's sake,' he said, 'but *for goodness' sake*.'

" 'I am sure, my dear,' he went on, 'Miss Jemima *means* to be kind, and all *we* have to do is to mean to be good.'

" I gulped down the lump in my throat, and said, 'But don't you think *sorceress* is a very wicked word?'

He stood up, holding both my hands in his. 'But my poor little lamb,' he cried, 'Miss Jemima is no more a sorceress than I am a Double Dutchman!' And with that he stooped, kissed the top of my head, and went out of the room.

" In a minute or two his footsteps returned. He opened the door an inch and peeped in. 'Why, we are better already!' he smiled at me over his spectacles. Then he came in, carrying a plate with a slice of bread-and-jam upon it, and a mug of milk. 'There,' he said, 'there's no sorcery in that, is there? And now you will be an obedient and gentle child, and think how happy Mamma will be to see you.' "

" I think," said Susan stoutly, " that that Mr. Wilmot is one of the kindest men I ever knew."

Her grandmother looked down on her with a crooked smile on her face. " He was so kind, Susan, that I never mentioned to him that the blackberry-jam on the bread was not a great favourite of mine! A moment after the sound of his steps had died away I heard the key once more in the lock. And what did I say to myself when he was gone? I looked forlornly at the plate, then out of the window, and I believe, Susan, that I did what they sometimes describe in the story-

books—I wrung my hands a little, repeating to myself, '*He doesn't understand. No! He doesn't understand.*'

"In an hour or two, Miss Jemima herself opened the door and looked in. She surveyed me where I sat, and then her glance fell on the untouched slice of bread-and-jam.

"'Ah,' said she, 'a good man like Mr. Wilmot cannot realise the hardness of a stubborn heart. I don't want to be unkind to you, Susan, but I have a duty to perform to your mother and to your poor uncle. You shall not leave this room until you apologise to me for your insolence of this morning, and until you tell me whom you were speaking to in the church.'

"The lie that came into my mind—'But I was not speaking to anyone, Miss Jemima'—faded away on my tongue. And I simply looked at her in silence.

"'You have a brazen face, Susan,' said she, 'and if you grow up as you are now, you will be a very wicked woman.'"

"I think," said Susan, "*that* was a perfectly dreadful thing to say, Grannie."

"Times change, my dear," said the old lady. "And now—well, it is fortunate there is very little more to tell. For this hill has taken nearly all the breath out of my body!"

The two of them were now on the crest of the hill. The light was beginning to die away in the sky, and the mists to grow milkier in the hollows of the flat country that lay around and beneath them. Far, far away, facing them across the wild, a reddish-coloured moon was rising. From low down below, a dog barked—it might be from dead Miss Jemima's farmyard. The little church surrounded by its low wall seemed to have gathered in closer to its scattered stones.

"Yes, Grannie dear?" breathed Susan, slipping her hand into the cotton-gloved one that hung near. "What then?"

"Then," replied her grandmother, "the door was locked again. Anger and hatred filled that silly little body sitting in the bedroom, and towards evening I fell asleep. And I must have dreamed a terrifying dream, though when I awoke I could not remember my dream—only its horror. I was terrified at it in that solitude, and I knew by the darkening at the window that it must be at least nine or ten o'clock. Night was coming, then. I could scarcely breathe at the thought. A second mug of milk had been put beside the plate; but I could not even persuade myself to drink any of it.

"Then in a while I heard Miss Jemima's footsteps pass my room. She made no pause there, and presently after I knew that she was gone to bed. She had not even troubled to look in on her wretched little prisoner. The hardness of that decided me.

"I tiptoed over to the door, and with both hands softly twisted the handle. It was still locked. Then I went to the window and discovered, as if the Fairy Creature herself had magicked it there, that a large hay-wain half full of hay, its shafts high in the air, had been left drawn up within a few feet of my window. It looked dangerous, but it was not actually a very difficult jump even for a child of my age; and I think I might have jumped even if there had been no cart at all. My one thought was to run away. *Any*where—so long as there was no chance of Miss Jemima's finding me.

"But even in that excited foolish moment I had sense enough left—before I jumped out of the window—to take a little warm jacket out of my chest-of-drawers, and to wrap

" Then I jumped—without the slightest harm to myself."

my money-box up in a scarf so that it should not jangle too much. I pulled my letter up from its cranny in the wainscot by its thread, and put it on the pink dressing-table. And at that moment, in the half dark I saw my face in the looking-glass. I should hardly have recognised it. It looked nearly as old, Susan, as I do now."

"Yes, dear Grannie," said Susan.

"Then I jumped—without the slightest harm to myself. I scrambled down into the yard and, keeping close to the house, crept past the kennel, the old sheep-dog merely shaking her chain with her thumping tail a little as I passed. And then, as soon as I was beyond the tall gate-posts, I ran as fast as my legs would carry me."

"But *not*," cried Susan almost with a shout in the still air, "*not* to the churchyard, Grannie. I think that was the most wonderful thing of all."

"Not so very wonderful, my dear, if you remember that I was now intensely afraid of the Fairy Creature, after seeing that look in her countenance when Miss Jemima was approaching the church. Something in me had all along, as you know, said, *Don't be deceived by her. She means you no well.* I cannot explain that; but so it was. Yet all the time I had been longing to follow where she might lead. Why she should wish to carry off a human child I don't know, but that she really wanted me I soon discovered for certain.

"If you follow the tip of my umbrella, you will just be able to see, Susan, a large meadow on the other side of the farm. But I don't think even your sharp eyes will detect the stones standing up in it. They are called the Dancers, and though I was a little frightened of passing them in the darkness, this was the only way to take. Gradually I approached

them, my heart beating beneath my ribs like a drum, until I was come near.

" And there, lovelier than ever, shining as fairly as if with a light of her own, sitting beneath the largest of the Dancers, directly in my path, was She. But this time I knew she was not alone. I cannot describe what passed in my heart. Still I longed to go, still I was in anguish at the thought of it. I didn't dare to look at her, and all I could think to do was to pretend not to see anything. How I had the courage I cannot think. Perhaps it was the courage that comes when fear and terror are almost beyond bearing.

" I put my money-box on to the grass; the scarf was already wet with dew. Then, very slowly, I put my black jacket on and buttoned it up. And then, with face turned away from the stone, I walked slowly on down the path, between the Dancers, towards the one that is called the Fiddler, in their midst. The night air was utterly silent. But as I approached the stone, it seemed as if it were full of voices and footsteps and sounds of wings and instruments, yet all as small as the voices of grasshoppers.

" I just kept saying, ' Oh, please, God; oh, please, God,' and walked on. And when at last I came to the stone, the whole world suddenly seemed to turn dark and cold and dead. Apart from the ancient stone, leaning up out of the green turf as it had done for centuries, there was not a sign or a symptom, Susan, of anything or anybody there."

" I think I can *just* see the stone, Grannie, but I would not be there like that in the dark, not for anything—anything in the world. . . . I expect it was what you *said* made the Fairy go. And then, Grannie ?"

" Then, Susan, my heart seemed to go out of me. I ran

on, stumbling blindly for a little way, then lost my balance completely over a tussock of grass or a mole-heap and fell flat on my face. Without any words that I can remember, I lay praying in the grass.

" But even then I did not turn back. I got up at last and ran on more lightly, and without looking behind me, across the field. Its gate leads into a by-road. It was padlocked, and as I mounted to the top my eyes could see just above a slight rise in the ground, for the lane lies beneath a little hill there.

" And coming along the road towards me there were shining the lamps of a carriage. I clambered down and crouched in the hedge-side, and in a few moments the lamps reappeared at the top of the incline and the horse came plod-plodding along down the hill. It was a wonderful mild summer night, the sky all faint with stars. What would have happened if it had been cold or pouring with rain I cannot think. But because it was so warm, the air almost like milk, the hood of the carriage was down.

" And as it came wheeling round by the hedge-side, I saw in the filmy starlight who it was who was sitting there. Neither horse nor coachman could see me. I jumped to my feet and ran after the carriage as fast as my legs could carry me, screaming at the top of my voice, ' Mother, Mother !'

" Perhaps the grinding of the wheels in the flinty dust and the noise of the hoofs drowned my calling. But I still held tight to my money-box, and though it was muffled by the scarf in which it was wrapped, at each step it made a dull noise like a bird-scare, and this must at last have attracted my mother's attention. She turned her head, opened her mouth wide at sight of me—I see her now—then instantly jumped

up and pulled the coachman's buttoned coat-tails. The carriage came to a standstill. . . .

" And that," said the old lady, turning away her head for one last glance of the countryside around her, " that is all, Susan."

Susan gave a last great sigh. " I can't think what you must have felt, Grannie," she said, " when you were safe in the carriage. And I can't——" But at this point she began to laugh very softly to herself, and suddenly stood still. " And I can't think either," she went on, " what Miss Jemima must have thought when you and *Great*-Grannie knocked at the door. You did tell me once that she opened her bedroom window at the sound of the knocking, and looked out in her nightdress. I expect she was almost as frightened as you were amongst those Dancers."

The two of them were now descending the hill on the side away from the farm and the church. And not only their carriage standing beneath them, but the evening star had come into view. There never was such a peaceful scene—the silver birches around them standing perfectly still, clothed with their little leaves, and the rabbits at play among the gorse and juniper.

" Bless me, Mum," said the old cabman as he opened the carriage door, " I was just beginning to think them fairises had runned away with you and the young lady."

Susan burst completely out laughing. " Now don't you think, Grannie," she said, " that is a very, very curious quincidence ?"

POEMS

By ROSE FYLEMAN

GOSSIP

"TRAINS are all the fashion,"
Said the fairy in the tree.
"They'll catch upon the brambles
When we go for moonlight scrambles,
And then where shall we be?"

"At the caterpillar's wedding,"
Said the pixie in the moss,
"The dewdrops were so fizzy
That all the guests went dizzy.
The Queen was very cross."

"The weather clerk's gone crazy,"
Said the brownie in the fern,
"And all the kinds of weather
Have got mixed up together.
They don't know where to turn!"

" It's nothing else but temper,"
Said the nixie in the pool;
" They've hung him on a spire
With a little bit of wire
And left him there to cool."

" But have you heard the latest?"
Said the goblin in the ditch.
" Young Puck has changed the dresses
Of the little twin princesses,
And they don't know which is which!"

ROSE FYLEMAN.

" Have you heard the latest ?"

CLOUDS

I SAW a lady in the sky to-day;
Her fleecy, floating skirts were long and wide,
Her arms were crossed, her head was turned away,
She had a dragon at her side:

A big grey dragon pawing in the air,
His curly tail went sweeping to the ground,
His mouth was open and his teeth were bare,
But he made no sound.

I turned to watch a butterfly go by,
And when I looked again where they had been—
The lady and the dragon in the sky—
They were not to be seen.

ROSE FYLEMAN.

The lady and the dragon in the sky.

COUNTRY

I'LL give you an apple,
I'll give you a pear,
And a bunch of red berries
To put in your hair;
A potful of honey,
A jugful of cream,
And a lavender cushion
To sweeten your dream.

TOWN

I'll give you an orange
As red as the sun,
A basket of goodies,
A bookful of fun,
A taffeta sunshade,
A bonnet of lace,
And a little French doll
With a porcelain face.

ROSE FYLEMAN.

Country and Town.

HOLLOW TREE STORE *By MABEL MARLOWE*

MRS. FLUFF was a squirrel who kept a shop. Every morning she made some lovely buns, all hot and crisp and sweet, all full of nuts and honey, and sold them in her shop.

The shop was in a hollow tree. It had a branch for a counter and some ivy for a roof, and there was an empty nest to put the money in.

"Buy, buy, buy!" said Mrs. Fluff when the cakes were ready.

"How much are they to-day?" asked the other squirrels.

"Six nuts for one cake! Six nuts for one cake!"

So the squirrels ran all about the wood, hunting for nuts, and for acorns and berries too. Then they hurried back to get their cakes. You should have seen how they sat up on the branches, with their bushy tails standing up behind them like little trees.

Munch, munch, munch.

You should have seen how they nibbled, and chewed, and chatted, and smiled at one another.

RICE
CASH BOX
MONKEY NUTS
CANARY SEED
D. HUTTON

" They are lovely cakes."

" Yes. They are."

" Buy, buy, buy !" cried Mrs. Fluff.

Now Bruin the Bear woke up in his den, and sniffed at the air. Never before had he smelt such a lovely smell.

" I smell hot cakes," said Bruin the Bear, licking his whiskers. He got up, gave himself a shake, and came out of his den. He sniffed and sniffed and sniffed at the air, and at last he found out where the shop was.

Patter, patter, patter ! Off he went to the hollow tree.

" Buy, buy, buy !"

" Pay, pay, pay !"

" I want some cakes. How much must I pay ?" said Bruin the Bear, with his red tongue lolling out.

" Six nuts for one cake ! Six nuts for one cake !"

" Ho, ho !" said Bruin, laughing deep in his chest, " do you think I am a squirrel, or a rat, or a bird ? A big fat father bear like me does not go searching for nuts. No, indeed ! You must give me some cakes for nothing."

" Indeed I won't," said Mrs. Fluff.

" Indeed you must !"

" I won't."

" You must. If you don't, I shall simply help myself."

But Mrs. Fluff would not give away her nice warm cakes. So Bruin the Bear opened his mouth very wide, put it close to the counter, and swept all the cakes into it with his broad hairy paw.

He swallowed them all in two ticks. He was so greedy

" I smell hot cakes."

that he did not stop to chew them, so he lost half the taste. But he trotted off home, feeling very pleased with himself.

" Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear !" cried Mrs. Fluff, in floods of tears.

" Oh dear, he has eaten them all !" cried all the squirrels.

That night Mrs. Fluff went to see her friend Solomon Owl. Solomon Owl was very wise, and he lived in the top of a church tower. It was a fine climb for Mrs. Fluff, I can

tell you, but she reached Solomon's home at last, and told him all about Bruin the Bear.

" He will do it again to-morrow," said Solomon Owl.

" Yes, I expect he will."

" He will do it again the next day, and the next day, and all the days. Your shop will never be safe any more."

" No, I know it won't. That is why I have come to you, dear, wise Solomon Owl. I want you to tell me what to do. You are so clever. Please think of a way to stop Bruin the Bear robbing my shop."

Then the wise old owl sat very still, like a bird that is stuffed, and he thought for a long time. At last he spoke. His words were slow, like the pastor reading the lessons in church, but the squirrel listened, and heard every word.

" Oh, thank you, dear, kind, wise Solomon," she said, and she went back to her home in the hollow tree.

Next morning Mrs. Fluff was up very early. She called one squirrel and said to him, " Go down to the seashore with your little bucket, and bring me some wet, salt, gritty sand."

So the squirrel went.

Then she said to another squirrel, " Go to the river, and get me some little sharp stones and some mud."

So the squirrel went.

Then she said to another squirrel, " Go deep into the woods and pick some bitter, bitter berries, as sour as sour. Pick me some thorns, and some thistles, and some nettles that sting."

So that squirrel went.

When all the things were fetched Mrs. Fluff put them into a dish, and mixed them up, and made them into cakes. She popped them into the oven, and cooked them all hot. The smell of them floated all over the wood.

Then Mrs. Fluff laughed very quietly to herself, though the other squirrels were not at all happy. But presently they saw Mrs. Fluff making some more cakes, all sweet and crisp and nutty.

The smell of them floated all over the wood.

" Buy, buy, buy ! Six nuts for one cake !"

Along came Bruin the Bear, with his red tongue lolling out.

" Ho, I want some cakes," he said.

She popped them into the oven.

"You must pay for them. Six nuts for one cake!"

Then Bruin the Bear laughed, and rocked his big body about. "Ho, ho, ho! Do you think I am a squirrel, or a rat, or a bird? A big fat father bear does not go hunting for nuts. No, indeed! If he *wants* cakes he *has* cakes. He has them for nothing. He just helps himself."

Then Mrs. Fluff began to look very worried, and to rub her little paws together.

"I hope I shall not be blamed when you are dead," she said.

"Dead?" said Bruin the Bear.

"Yes. If you eat the wrong cakes you will soon be dead."

"Why?"

"Eat them if you like. Steal them if you like. But I hope I shall not be blamed when you are dead."

Now Bruin the Bear was a cowardy coward, and he did not want to be dead, so he said, "Oh, Mrs. Fluff, why must I be careful? I ate your cakes yesterday, and I am not dead. What do you mean?"

Then Mrs. Fluff looked very solemn, and she replied:

"Some of the cakes are poison."

"Which are poison?"

"I shall not tell you. Some of the cakes are sour."

"Which are sour?"

"I shall not tell you. Some of the cakes are gritty, and sandy, and thorny, and muddy. They would kill a lion, I should think. They would kill an elephant, I should think. They would be perfectly certain to kill a bear."

" Oh, which ones are those ?"

" I shall not tell you. But some of the cakes are nice . . . oh, ever so nice. They are melty, and crisp, and sweet. They are made with eggs, and cream, and nuts, and honey."

" Oh, which ones are those ?"

" I shall not tell you. I only tell customers who bring their money with them. Six nuts for one cake !"

Then Bruin the Bear went away to think it over. But he soon came back, and I think you can guess what he brought in his pocket.

TOFFEE BOY

By MABEL MARLOWE

THERE was once a boy who ate so much toffee that when he sat in the sun he melted.

He melted and melted until he was just a brown pool of treacle.

Now this treacle began to move slowly down the hill. It trickled past the school and across a meadow and under a stile, and at last it came to a little brook, running in the valley.

Now there was a plank of wood across this brook, to serve for a bridge, and the treacle trickled over this plank until it reached the middle. Then it stopped.

It was very cool over the water, and before long the treacle began to set. In a very little while the middle of that little bridge was all toffee. Some of it was like a pool of brown glass. Some of it hung over the edges like brown icicles.

Now when it was getting dark a bunny came hopping that way. He hopped to the middle of the bridge, and sat down to watch the sunset.

Presently another bunny came that way.

"What are you doing there?" he said to the first bunny.

"I am sitting down to watch the sunset."

"I will come too."

Hop, hop, hop! The second bunny hopped on to the bridge, and sat down to watch the sunset.

Presently another bunny came that way.

" What are you doing there?" he said.

" We are sitting here to watch the sunset."

" I will come too."

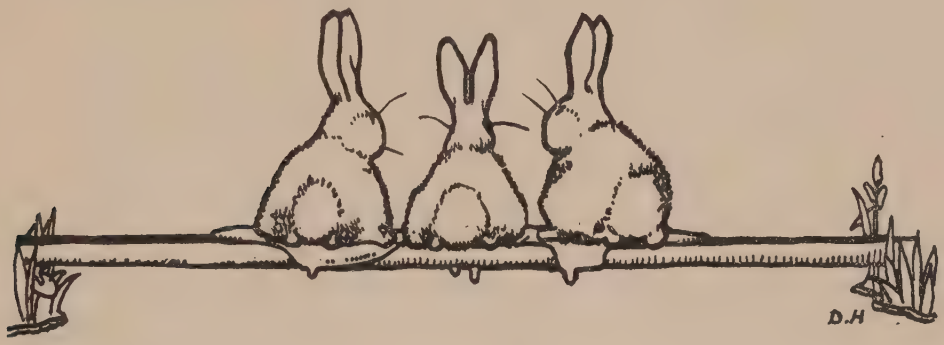
The red sun went down and down, and the three bunnies sat still upon that little bridge until the last rays were gone.

" Now I will hunt for cabbage for my supper," said one.

" Yes, so will I."

" And so will I."

Then they all tried to get up.



Pull, pull!

Tug, tug!

Struggle, struggle!

" Oh, dear! oh dear! I can't get up."

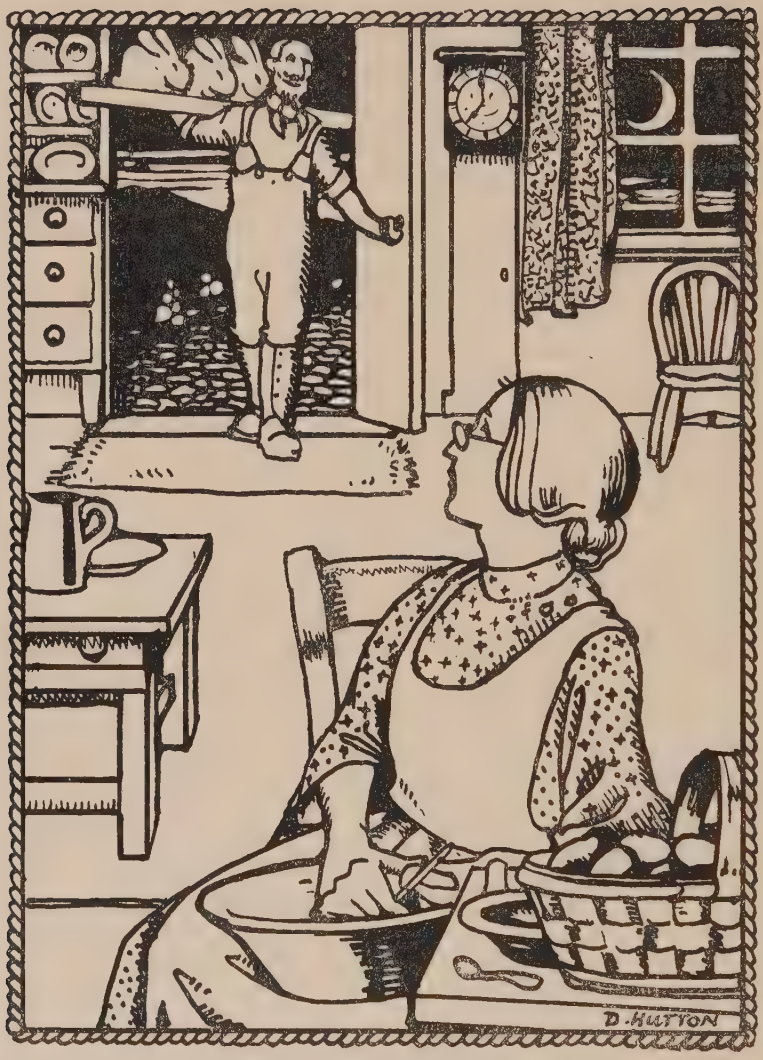
" Neither can I."

" Neither can I."

" I am stuck fast."

" So am I."

" And so am I."



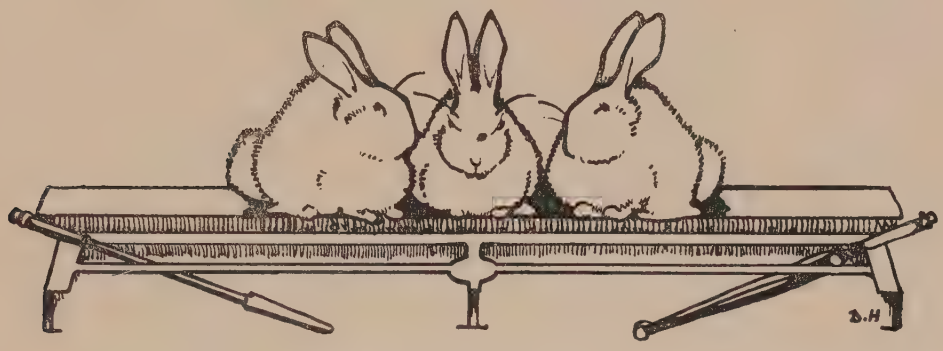
" See the fine supper I have brought for you."

Now just at that moment a man came along. He was a long, lean man, very weary and very hungry, but when he saw those three bunnies on that bridge he began to laugh.

" Ha, ha ! Ho, ho ! These will do nicely for my supper," he said. So he stooped and took hold of the plank, and pulled it hard and lifted it up, bunnies and all. He put it on his shoulder, bunnies and all, and went off home.

" See the fine supper I have brought for you," he said to his wife.

Now when the wife saw the bunnies she was very glad.



Very quickly she got paper, and matches and sticks, and made a big fire.

" I will pull some turnips to cook with the bunnies," she said. So she went into the garden to pull the turnips.

" I will pull some carrots, too," said the man. So he went into the garden to pull the carrots.

" Oh dear ! oh dear ! We shall soon be put into a pie," said one bunny.

" Yes. I am hot enough to be roasting now. What a big fire that old woman has made !"

She threw open the window.

It certainly was a big fire. It roared up the chimney, and crackled and flamed, and the room became as hot as an oven.

" Goodness gracious me ! I believe I am coming unstuck," said one bunny in a whisper.

" Yes, so am I."

" And so am I."

" Sh ! Keep quiet. The old woman is coming back."

Back came the old woman, with a bunch of turnips in her hand. " Whew, how hot it is !" she said, and she threw open the window.

" Quick !" said all the bunnies at once. There were three little scuffles, three mighty jumps, and three frightened rabbits were gone through the window. In a flash their tails vanished over the hill.

" Where are the bunnies ?" said the man, coming in with a bunch of carrots.

But there was nothing but a plank of sticky wood, and a brown pool of treacle on the floor.

THE OPEN DOOR *By LAURENCE HOUSMAN*

FOR fifty years, every night of his life, old Caleb had locked the door before going to bed. And so, having made the house safe, he slept sound.

All that time he had lived alone, working hard, a labourer upon the land, for a small weekly wage. Now that he had grown old and feeble his wage had become less, and he had little enough to live on; still it was enough; and in his small two-roomed cottage he had just the necessary things for keeping house. This he did all by himself: he had no children, no wife, no friend, and no money. People, living near about, spoke of him as "the lonely man"; and so he had been for fifty years: he had got into the way of it, nor was it likely now that he would ever get out of it.

One night, just as he was locking the door, the thought came to him, "What have I in the house that anyone could wish to take? Why, then, do I go on every night locking the door?"

Twice from force of habit he turned the key in the lock, and twice he unturned it again. Then he opened the door and looked out. It was a cold night and a full moon; but inside the remains of a fire still glowed upon the hearth, and the house was cosy and warm. As long as he had strength to go out into the forest and gather fuel, the comfort of warmth would still belong to him, however poor he might become. Now, though the nights were cold, the heat of the hearth went

Alice Buckels

" What have I in the house that anyone could wish to take ?"

up into the room where he slept, and there was never a night when he did not sleep soundly and well. And so, because that comfort belonged to him, the frost outside under the moon looked beautiful. He came in again, closed the door but did not lock it, and went up to bed.

Now whether it came of going into the cold air from the warm room, I do not know; but next morning when he woke up he found his limbs stiff and full of pain; he could not bend his back, he could hardly walk: and so, for the first time on a week-day for fifty years, he stayed at home and did not go out to work.

He was in no danger of starving, for he had a barrel of meal and a flitch of bacon in the house, and outside a big bury of potatoes. Also he had dried herbs with which to make herb tea, and in the well there was water; but he had no store of wood.

So all day, wishing to make his scant wood last till he was well again, he kept up only a small fire, and went to bed cold, wondering whether he had wood enough left to last for another day.

The next morning when he got up he was no better; he could not bend his back, and he could not go out. But still his wood lasted through the day; and so it did the next day, and the next.

This puzzled him, and he began to look at it attentively, where it lay piled in a dark corner by the hearth. And presently he became quite sure that, if anything, it did not diminish but grew; there was always enough to keep the fire going during the day and until he went up to bed; and the next morning he always found there was still enough to carry on through another day.

So one night, on going to bed, he counted the logs that he had left—only twelve; and when he came down the next morning there were twenty-five.

Suddenly he remembered that this had begun to happen since he had left off locking his door. It meant, then, that somebody had come in during the night to supply his needs; but as he had no friends in the world, and as, so far as he knew, nobody had heard about his present plight, he wondered who it could be.

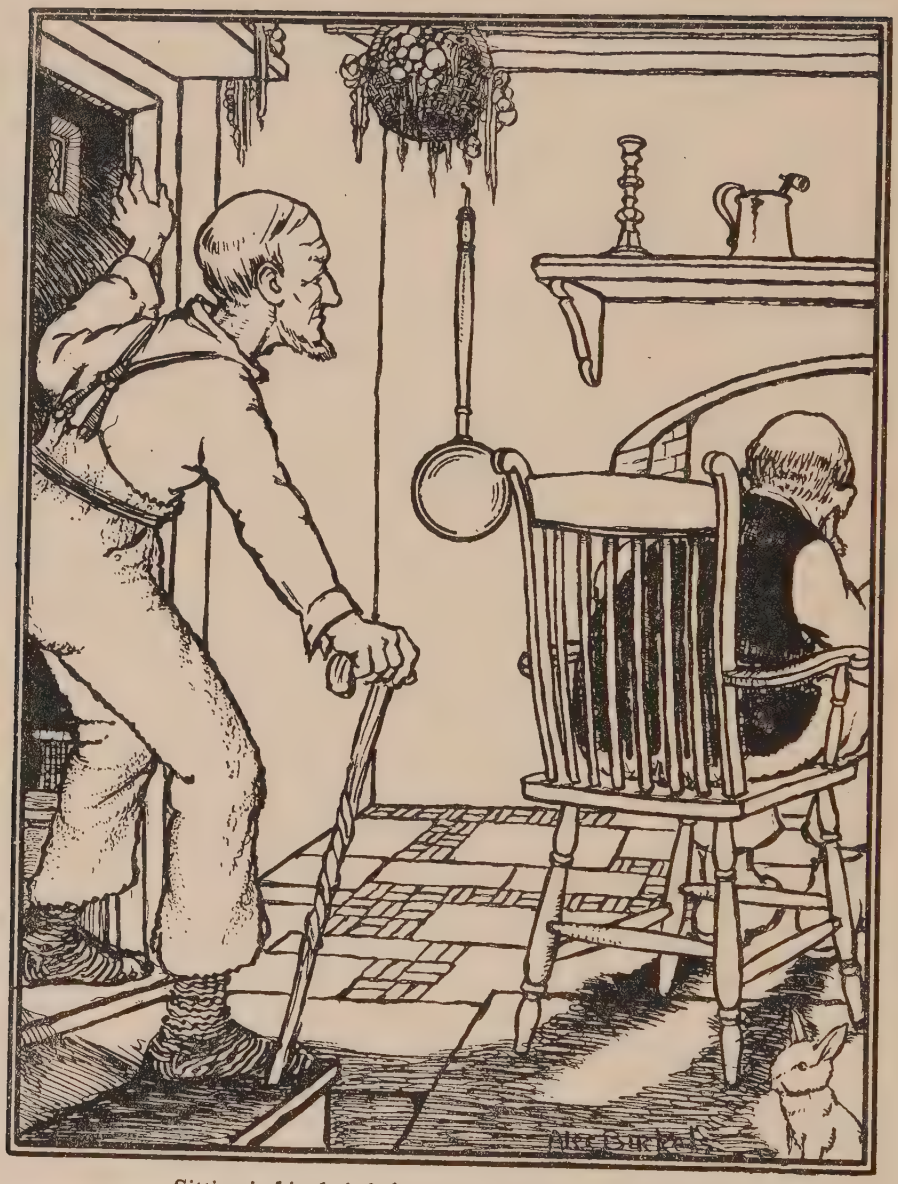
And so, that night, when he went up to bed, he lay down upon it, but did not undress, and did not go to sleep.

For a long while he lay listening, but there was no sound—no steps outside, no opening of the door, no noise of anyone moving below; till, as he waited and nothing happened, he fell asleep, and when he woke it was morning. And then, going downstairs, he found more logs lying by the hearth and the fire embers still glowing and warm.

The next night he waited as before; and when after two hours of listening he heard no sound, he rose up softly and crept down; and there, sitting in his chair before the fire, he saw an old man, as bent and old as himself, stooping forward and warming his hands at the blaze of a log that had only just been put on.

The old man seemed so quiet and easy, and so much at home, that Caleb had no fear or anger at seeing him seated there, as though chair and house belonged to him. Going softly across he touched the intruder upon the shoulder, and asked, "How did you come here?"

And without lifting his head or turning to look at him the old man answered, "You left your door open; that's how."



Sitting in his chair before the fire he saw an old man.

" I left it unlocked," said Caleb, " I know."

" Unlocked is open," said the other, " as soon as one tries the latch."

" How did you come to try it?" inquired Caleb.

" I've tried it every night for the last fifty years," answered the stranger; " but it was always locked."

" Yes," said Caleb.

" Why?"

" Don't people generally lock their doors at night?"

" Aye, if they've any reason for it. Had you?"

Caleb sat and thought awhile, then said: " Once there went out of my door something that I valued. It never came back. Ever since that I've always locked my door, till last week."

" Had you anything of value still left to make you do it?"

" No," answered Caleb sadly, " I'd nothing left. I locked it because, if I'd only begun locking it before, perhaps I shouldn't have lost what I did."

" What did you lose?"

" My little daughter. She was only three years old then. Her mother was dead. One night I laid her to sleep; and when I went up to bed myself, there she lay sleeping sound. When I woke up in the morning she was gone. I searched everywhere, inside and out, field and wood; I followed the stream, I looked in the well, I never found her. She never came back."

Heaving a great sigh, he crossed to the other side of the hearth, and there, seating himself, remained quite still looking into the flames.

" And so, after that, you began locking your door?"

" Yes, but it was too late then."

The stranger said, " That same night I came to your door, found it locked, and went away again."

" You came !" cried Caleb, in great astonishment. " What for ? Who are you ?"

The other looked at him a little strangely. " So you don't remember me?" he said. " We've been two people so long. Name ? Names mean little. I'm just your fellow-man."

" Why did you come *then*, that night ?" asked Caleb, looking at him hard.

" It was a cold night," replied the other, " a full moon, frost. Here, inside, I saw the glow of a fire still burning upon the hearth. You had forgotten to put that out. I wanted to come in and be warm; but I found the door locked."

" But what brought you here at all ?"

There was a long pause before the other answered. Then he said, pondering his words as he spoke: " It seemed the place where I was most wanted. That day you'd lost yourself—lost heart, lost hope. But there in the moon I saw the track leading up to your door; and I said to myself, ' That's where I came from; I'll go back.' "

" Back ?" queried Caleb.

But without any pause the other continued. " And as I went I saw something—a strange sight it was, and a pretty ! Oh, you'd have believed it then, that night when first you locked your door. You might have looked out then, and seen it too."

Caleb began to have a fear. " What did you see ?" he asked.

" Out on the open hill where the wood leaves off," said the other, " I saw a lot of grey rabbits dancing in a ring. I say

dancing, because there was such life and joy and movement in it, and it all went to time as though there was music which one could not hear. And in the middle of them all sat a little child, a small three-year-old, wrapped in a silver rabbit-skin; there she sat, and clapped her hands and crowed, while all the rabbits danced round her."

Caleb's hand went down heavily to the bench upon which he was sitting. "So!" he cried, "it was as I thought: 'twas the fairies that carried her away."

"Fairies?" queried the other. "I don't know about fairies. Rabbits was all that I saw."

"But," said Caleb, "you saw her wearing the silver rabbit-skin. "If they weren't fairies, how did she come by that?"

"Maybe she just found it, and put it on," Fellow-man answered.

"Aye, aye," said Caleb, "that might well be the way of it. That's the sort of thing they do; they leave it lying, you come along, you find it and put it on; then you belong to them." Then he added: "You saw all that, you say? For how long? Where did they go?"

"I went softly," Fellow-man answered, "skirted the field so as not to disturb them in their play; then, when I got to the path leading here, they all began following me."

Caleb sat up, very still and expectant.

"Followed you, you say?"

"Yes."

"Did she follow, too?"

"That's why the others did. When she saw me, she got up and came after me. Then they all came after her."

"To this door?" said Caleb, in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"Almost," replied the other. "She was still coming on towards me, as I put out my hand to lift the latch. Then I found the door locked; and when I turned and looked round they were all gone."

Caleb bowed his head, as though that grief had only happened now. "But why didn't you call?" he asked. "I was never asleep! Weeks and weeks I didn't sleep—waiting."

"You'd locked the door," said the other. "After that I always found it locked."

"Always? Why did you come again?"

The other looked at him silently for a while, then answered: "You see, I was your fellow-man."

Caleb turned searching eyes and looked at him hard. "And you say that you have been to my door every night for the last fifty years?"

"Yes," said the other, "that is so; it seemed a long time waiting till the door opened."

Caleb was thinking hard now. "Did you ever see *her* again?" he asked at last.

"Of course, every night."

Here was something wonderful—hardly to be believed. "You mean to say," cried Caleb, "that you saw her that night when you came and found the door open only a week ago?"

"I saw her to-night," replied the other.

"That little thing? How could you? It's fifty years now."

"She hasn't changed," replied Fellow-man. "The night when I found the door open and looked back, she was there;

she still stood, waiting, looking. Always before that, when I had looked for her, she had gone. The next night she came a little nearer, and the next night nearer still. Now when she follows me she comes right up to the door, just as if she were wanting to come in too. Some night she will."

"Do the grey rabbits come in?"

"Oh! aye; they come in and they go again. It's to please little silver-skin they do that, I reckon. Aye! right inside and up to the fire they come; and she watching them."

Caleb felt as though he could not breathe: he got up and stumbled to the door, opened it and looked out. "There's nothing there now," he said, having gazed long and steadily into the night. And it seemed to him suddenly that all the old man had been telling him was only a dream.

But then he remembered something that was not a dream; he came in again, shut the door, and said: "I have to thank you for bringing me wood; but for you, this last week, I should have had to go without. You've been a kind friend."

"No," replied Fellow-man, "I've not brought you any wood. How was I to know you wanted it? To be sure, sometimes, when I've come in, I've put a piece upon the fire just to keep it going while I was here. Maybe you'll find out who brings you the wood if you stay up long enough."

"And how long," asked Caleb, "when you come, do you stay?"

"Till you wake up," replied the other.

"But I am awake now!" cried Caleb; and as he spoke he found himself actually awake, sitting on the bench by the hearth, and looking at the empty chair over which the grey light of day was beginning faintly to show.

There was nothing there to prove that what had now become a dream had ever been true. "And yet," he said to himself, "I couldn't have dreamed that; no, that would be impossible!"

He went and opened the door, and looked out. Soft and grey through a mist of rain came the dawn, the frost had gone. He stooped (he found he could bend his back again), and searched in the soft earth for the print of feet. If during the night anyone had come in and gone out, there would surely be foot-prints. But of human foot-prints he could find none. And yet foot-prints there were, the path was strewn with them; here, there, everywhere, scores upon scores, the marks of rabbits' feet. So if his meeting with Fellow-man and their talk together had proved but a dream, the rabbits' feet were true. Daylight told him that.

Cured of his aches and pains, he went back to work and renewed his store of wood; and at night, because illness had made him weak, he came home very tired. But when after he had supped the hour grew late, the thought of bed or sleep became impossible.

Drawing his chair round to the other side of the hearth so that it faced the door, he put out the light and in the warm glow of the wood-embers sat waiting. But presently it seemed to him that this was not enough; his mind went so much further than he could see; and if now at night he left the door unlocked, why should it not also be open? So going across he opened it wide, propped it so that the wind should not close it again, and went back to his place.

It was a clear night, the waning moon rose late and thin; but as it mounted its beams grew strong, sending along the

ground dark shadows of grass-blades and stones. Presently, moving forward through these, he saw the longer shadows of rabbits' ears, all upright and alert for sound; and hiding behind them came the rabbits themselves, one silver, and all the rest grey.

The silver rabbit looked in across the threshold this way and that, waited, listened, then jumped and was in. One by one all the grey rabbits came after.

" Don't move, don't speak !" said a voice in his ear; and there was Fellow-man seated close at his side.

The silver rabbit hopped slowly round the room, stopped at the foot of the stairs, rose up on its hind legs as though about to mount, then turned, frisked back to the door and was gone. And all the grey rabbits went after it.

Caleb's eyes were hungry as he watched it go; but all he said was, " That was wonderful ! Even if I were to wake up now, I should not believe that this was a dream."

As he said so, the same thing happened as on the night before; he woke to find himself alone; it was morning again.

But now the question whether it was dream or truth began no longer to trouble him; for having opened his door Caleb had opened his mind too; and as everything that comes to the open mind is true while it lasts, what better could he wish than night after night to have so beautiful a dream, which, so long as it lasted, could not be anything but true ?

The next night, after Caleb had settled down in his chair with the door open, the rabbits came again—the silver and the grey; and Fellow-man was there at his side.

This time the rabbits were bolder and stayed longer; and as it went by where he sat the silver rabbit stopped, put

The silver rabbit looked in across the threshold.

two tiny paws upon his foot, lifted its head and looked at him. Then going all round the room, it stopped again at the foot of the stairs, ran up, came down again, and went out. And all the grey rabbits went after it.

Caleb had been holding his breath for quite a long time. "It went upstairs!" he cried when all were gone. "It went upstairs! Did you see? I never could have invented that in a dream."

And as he said so, the dream ended and he woke.

The next night Caleb got a little basin, and filled it with bread-and-milk; and when the silver rabbit came it sat at his feet eating the bread-and-milk with all the grey rabbits looking on. And when it went up the stairs it remained there for quite a long time, and all the grey rabbits sat below waiting for it. And when at their departure Caleb woke to find that it was morning again, he found also that the bread-and-milk had really been eaten—that anyhow it was gone. So much at least of his dream remained true.

The thought of it made him happy all day; and at night when he got home, it seemed to him as though his old heart danced and sang, knowing so certainly that before the night was out the little silver rabbit would come again.

Also, for this night, he had another idea, an idea of such beautiful possibilities that it almost frightened him. From upstairs he brought down the little cot in which, fifty years ago, the three-year-old one had been used to sleep. He brought it from where it had always stood by the side of his bed; he made it soft with pillows, and warm with a covering of wool, and setting it before the hearth with the small basin of bread-and-milk close beside it, he waited for the silver rabbit to come.

The silver rabbit came just as before; sat at his foot, stood up and looked in his face, ate its bread-and-milk, then stood up again and looked at the cot. For quite a long time it stood and looked, while all the grey rabbits sat watching it.

Then, oh joy, oh wonder to behold! it took off its silver rabbit-skin, and there came out from beneath, all rosy, cosy and warm, a little three-year-old child, naked as on the day when it was new; and climbing up into the cot it snuggled down and went to sleep, with its old father of fifty years ago looking on, as well as he could look on for the tears of happiness which filled his eyes.

By the side of the cot just where the three-year-old had left it, lay the silver rabbit-skin, empty of its inhabitant now the first time for fifty years. Slowly old Caleb reached out his hand and took hold of it; and all at once the grey rabbits sprang up with a low squeak of alarm and ran out of the house.

Away in the open they stopped, and turned to look back. Across the threshold the firelight fell on their frightened eyes, their poor ears flapped anxiously up and down; a queer noise of shivering came through their fur as though inside their bodies were all being shaken.

And there sat Caleb, holding the silver rabbit-skin in his hand; very still he sat looking at it, and for a long time he did not move. By his side sat Fellow-man watching him.

Caleb said, " Now that I've got this she need never go back to them. I've only to burn it, and she will be all mine."

Fellow-man said, " Will she remember you again after fifty years?"

Caleb stooped down and looked at the sleeping child. " She hasn't changed," he said, " not a day."

"But you have," said Fellow-man; "you have become old."

"Aye," answered Caleb, "I haven't long to live now."

"But she," said Fellow-man, "may live many years yet. When you have her back she won't stay as she is now. Life will take hold of her; she too will begin to grow old. To make up for lost time, perhaps she will age soon. Who knows? It's fifty years."

Caleb did not answer, he bent down and looked long at the face of the sleeping child.

"She looks happy," he said at last; "she looks well. There, see! She is laughing in her sleep; she is happy even in her dreams."

"Perhaps she is dreaming about you."

"Oh, no," said Caleb, "not about me! It's fifty years, and that is a long time."

"And yet, as she hasn't changed, why should she not be dreaming of you? Time to her may mean nothing. It's only in your brain that fifty years have gone. In hers, perhaps, it's only a day."

"Then," said Caleb, "she would remember me."

"Aye," replied Fellow-man, "but other things—would she forget."

Again Caleb sat looking and did not reply. So close he bent over the sleeping three-year-old that her warm breath became his; and from his forehead a long lock of grey hair fell touching the curls of gold.

"Her little mind is full of dreams," he said at last. "She is happy even in her sleep. The grey rabbits have been good to her. But if she comes back to me—who knows? I've

not had so happy a life myself. Maybe the fairies have done better by her than I could have done. Anyway, it's not for me to decide; let her do that herself."

The grey rabbits, looking anxiously through the door, saw him put down the silver rabbit-skin in the place from which he had taken it. Presently they saw that he was no longer awake but asleep, and by his side Fellow-man seemed asleep also.

Into the house they ran, and shaking the cot of the sleeping three-year-old, "Wake, wake!" they cried. "Get up! Put on your rabbit-skin and come, for in here there is danger!"

The little three-year-old woke, sat up and rubbed her eyes, while round and round ran the grey rabbits telling her to make haste. Looking up, she saw an old man with bent head sitting asleep; and before any of the grey rabbits could stop her, she stood up from the end of her little cot and climbed on to his knee; climbed higher, put her arms round his neck and kissed his face. Then she slipped down, put on her silver rabbit-skin, and in another moment was out of the house. And all the grey rabbits ran after her.

When Caleb woke it was morning again. He looked at the empty crib, felt the hollow still just warm where the little three-year-old had lain; looked on the floor where he had left the silver rabbit-skin. That too was gone, but a few of its white hairs were left. One by one he gathered them carefully together and laid them in a safe place. "So that's decided," he said. Then he got up, lighted the fire, had breakfast, and went to work.

The next night, as they sat together over the fire, he told Fellow-man his dream—the dream that had come to him after

She stood up from the end of her little cot and climbed on to his knee.

they had both gone to sleep—of the little three-year-old getting up from her crib, climbing upon his knee, giving him a kiss, and then back into her rabbit-skin and away with all the grey rabbits after her.

Caleb had not yet opened the door. "It's strange," he said, when Fellow-man asked him why, "I don't think she'll come again; and why should she? I know everything I need to know. She's happy; she's got a long life; she's going to stay young. What more do I want now?"

Fellow-man said, "The first night I came to your door—the first night it was locked—I passed them dancing together on the hill. A pretty sight that was. Maybe they'll be there now."

Caleb got up, went to the door and opened it. "Why, there's snow!" he exclaimed surprised. "There was none when I came in; and now it's lying deep."

Fellow-man came and stood by his side, "Aye, it's a fair night," he said. "If they are dancing in the snow now, to-morrow you'll see their marks. Oh, a pretty sight it must be!"

"Let us go," said Caleb, "and see!"

"Nay, nay," answered Fellow-man, "you know the road as well as I do. You don't need me to show it you now. I won't come. I'll bide here and wait."

As Caleb went out, all at once he remembered something that had never yet been explained. Coming back, he said to Fellow-man, "If it wasn't you who brought me the wood every night, who was it?"

Fellow-man turned and smiled at him. "I thought you knew," he said; "the grey rabbits, of course."

" The grey rabbits !" cried Caleb, astonished.

" When you came to need it," answered Fellow-man; " as soon as you began leaving your door open. It was only then they were able to. After all they did owe you something in return for what they'd taken, didn't they ?"

Caleb was still trying to get the thing fixed in his mind; and, as his way was with Fellow-man, he made no direct answer, only went on thinking.

" Then it was their wood that was warming me," he said slowly, " when I——" He stopped; then a curious look of contentment came into his face.

" Fellow-man," he said, " do you know how glad I am now that I didn't burn the rabbit-skin ?"

Fellow-man nodded. " Yes, I know," he said. " You were right."

" Aye, right's the word !" replied Caleb. Then, as he went out, " There's more snow coming," he said, and shut the door.

Nobody ever again saw Caleb alive. Late the next day he was found lying in a deep drift of snow at the bottom of an old lime-pit. It looked as though he must have fallen over from above; but more snow had fallen since, covering him as he lay; so nobody could be quite sure.

His face, when they uncovered it, was very happy and peaceful; and when, digging deeper, they uncovered more, maybe they found the reason for that look of deep content; for there in his arms, hidden away under his coat, lay a silver-white rabbit, too fast asleep ever to wake again.

'Tis more than fifty years now since Caleb died. The country-folk say that the house where he used to live is haunted; and yet, if it is so, no one seems to be afraid of it.

A shepherd told me a tale of it once. Going by, late at night, he saw a light showing; and the door, which in daytime was shut, stood open. Coming up the overgrown path, now so seldom used, he saw within two old men sitting, both so exactly alike that you could not tell them apart. But in the arms of one of them something small lay snuggled; and at his feet stood a child's crib all ready for use, but no one in it. Nothing was doing; neither of the old men stirred or spoke; and yet, to look at, they seemed very companionable.

" And all about the open door," said the shepherd, " there were a lot of grey rabbits sitting and looking in. It was a curious thing to see," he said; " and maybe I only thought I saw it because a gust of wind had come and blown open the door. For it's strange what things a man can make himself see, by just looking through an open door."

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